

Byzantium in the Mirror: The Message of *Skylitzes Matritensis* and Hagia Sophia in Constantinople

Elisabeth Piltz



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Introduction

All historical research is an effort to transgress the limits of time trying to revive the past. With the help of artistic documents and monuments it is occasionally possible to find a translucent mirror of a past era. Byzantium cannot be reconstructed, but its art provides an intensely vivid picture of its official and ordinary life. We have chosen two monuments indicating this tendency.

The illuminated manuscript of the Skylitzes chronicle in Biblioteca nacional in Madrid in a luxury version is unique. It is the most important preserved document illustrating particular historical events in a secular frame. It introduces us to Byzantium – an empire lasting for more than a thousand years. Its literature and art provide humanity with invaluable treasures. This culture is still living in the Greek Orthodox church. The fusion of Hellenism and Byzantinism resulted in an artistic culture that represents the world as an icon of the divine sphere and confronts the beholder with the divine presence.

By studying this manuscript we are participating in a middle Byzantine historical drama, triumphs, ceremonial life and its dark side, disasters and persecutions. The painters illuminating the manuscript are communicating a message that touches the beholder by its directness and unvarnished character. The period is a drama of war and a drama of artistic culture. The illuminators favour the icon-friends in the struggle that even divides the imperial families in different directions.

During the period of printing of my text a new publication has appeared by Vasiliki Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle of Ioannes Skylitzes in Madrid*, Leiden 2002, which presents a distorted version of the interpretation of fol. 10 v, the famous elevation on the shield of an emperor and his co-emperor, an art historical *topos* and not a real event.

Hagia Sophia in Constantinople provides the exclusive opportunity today to experience Byzantium, a mirror of the cultural basis of the medieval Greek society. In spite of being transformed into a mosque, it still proclaims the message of heaven approaching the earth in its dialectical interplay between light and constructive masses. In this building time has stopped and the acclamations of the emperors and the ecumenical patriarchs are still echoing in the walls. Its materialization of the celestial sphere is so impressive that also the aniconic Moslems perceived the message. Its influence on the Ottoman architecture thousand years later is primary.

What we learn from Byzantium is that authentic cultures never die. From all the lost monuments even a fragment illuminates the truth.

Skylitzes Matritensis A 12th-century Action Video

The famous manuscript *Vitr 2: 26* in the Biblioteca nacional in Madrid invites us to Byzantium, a culture very similar to our own and yet very different. The picture – a naked expression of any culture, left to the arbitrary judgment of historians – is a mirror of aspects of social life, world conception, perspective on men, women, children and eternity. When pictures are interpreted as the immediate reflection of a mentality, it is not completely possible to filter away the subjective ideas of the interpreter and the limitations of his mental horizon, determined by his own time. Pictures are fundamental expressions of the human mind. Their content is a function of the form. They are loudly speaking fragments, able to reveal a hidden distant world and to synthesize its categories of thinking and acting in their own rhetorical language. The Madrid Skylitzes is narrative and direct. Apart from some representations of divine majesty it can be grasped by a modern child. The linear drawing is swift, nervous and impressive, its clear vivid colours complementary, reinforcing each other. They are secular documentary pictures. Only with one exception borrowing the languages of representational sacred books with a frame around the scene and a golden background, on fol 80 a. But this exception is not appropriate, as it represents a secular event, the cruel fate of the rebel Bardas who was executed by Emperor Michael III in 866 (fig 1).



Fig 1 The rebel Bardas executed by Emperor Michael III, fol 80 a

At the end of the 11th century a high official at the Byzantine court, John Skylitzes, *kouropalates*, with care for the material conditions of the palace, and *droungarios tés biglēs*, cavalry captain, composed a chronicle covering the period from Michael I Rangabe (811-813) to the ascension to the throne of Isaac Comnenos (1057-1059). A sumptuous edition with illuminations in a quite modern “action” style was created in the imperial scriptoria in Constantinople. A copy of this original was later produced in Southern Italy, possibly in Palermo. The illuminations are 574 in number and very apt for a presentation in a video sequence. The pictures run in horizontal registers without frames and interfoliate the text. Exceptionally they cover a whole page. Many miniaturists of different traditions have collaborated in the execution. The Byzantine tradition is exposed on folios 9-87 and 227-234 by individual masters. Here and there a pronounced Arabic influence can be noticed, in particular when the scene must be read from right to left. Outside the purely Byzantine folios the princes are no longer represented with a nimbus and the artistic level varies. The colour planes are one-dimensional and the scenes are developed in the foreground of the surface.

A panorama of Byzantine events are “videotaped” before our eyes with a principle of selection not always in concordance with the text, which appears to be quite modern. The general principles of series and

comic strips are used. Every piece of illustration has an explanatory picture text, a legend, in red ink, not always appropriate for the actual scene. Eleven legends are lacking. Consequently they seem to have been added after the illumination.

While the Skylitzes text represents the most important historical events in a chronological sequence, the miniatures pick out certain themes, as it seems, rather deliberately in relation to the text. Like the modern mass-media reportage this method of extracting essential themes favours the spectacular, the dramatic and the thrilling. Favourite motives are coronations, marriages, scenes of war, sieges, exilings, murder, violence, blinding, demonstrations of trophies (which might as well be the decapitated head of an emperor as his drowned body in suggestive colours), executions, torture, exposition of the “Greek fire” (the secret weapon of Byzantium), the martyrdom of iconodules (icon-friends), the pulling down and destruction of icons on the church walls, diplomatic embassies to Bulgaria, to the caliph in Baghdad or to the Abchasians, a tribe only recently gaining place in our conscience thanks to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, everything reproduced with obtrusive realism without censorship or shame. Here mythological personifications are totally lacking, no blessing Christ or Virgin appears at the emperor’s side – a naked secular historical documentation, not filtered or rearranged in relation to reality, unique in its kind, shocking and fascinating.

N G Wilson has demonstrated that this type of secular illuminated manuscript belongs to a lost series of *manuscripts de luxe* produced as gifts to be given away by the imperial court. Two other specimens have been preserved, the Chronicle of Constantine Manasses in the Vatican Library, *Vat Slav 2*, and a copy of the Russian version of the Chronicle of Georgios Hamartolos in the National Library in Moscow, *fol 172, no 100*. Both depend on lost Greek prototypes. He traces a lost frontispiece that possibly had an image of Christ, the emperor, for whom the manuscript was originally illuminated, and the author, in this case Skylitzes himself. Cirac Estopanan, André Grabar, M. Manoussacas, and Athanas Boshkov have published the miniatures. How complex the interpretation of the pictures is I will illustrate with one example.

On fol 10 v (fig 2) we see two nimbed figures, standing on a shield, carried by beardless eunuchs and acclaimed by two surrounding groups of senators and dignitaries. The right figure crowns the left one. In spite of the ideal space surrounding the scene we must take for granted that it occurs in the Hippodrome of Constantinople. Above the picture, placed within the current text, the red legend states: *The war between the Romans (i e the Byzantines) and the Bulgarians and the apostasy of Leon the Armenian*. The text seems entirely to lack relevance for the picture. In the continuing text where the picture is placed, Skylitzes relates about the abhorred Bulgarian chieftain Krum who killed Emperor Nicephoros I (802-811) and Leon the Armenian is mentioned as a refused pretendent to the throne. What the term “apostasy” implies is not quite clear, however, whether it hints at a revolt or a deviation from the correct Orthodox dogma, in other words, an insinuation about the iconoclast tendencies of Leon V, we do not know. The latter interpretation is closer at hand, as the miniaturists of the manuscript are explicitly favouring icons. Consequently the legend does not contribute to the interpretation of the picture.

Cirac Estopanan interpreted the image as Emperor Michael I Rangabe crowned by the patriarch Nicephoros I. But in this picture there is no patriarch and neither Skylitzes nor any other source in fact mentions a patriarch at the coronation. It is only stated that Michael was proclaimed emperor by the people and the senate. No detailed information whatsoever was offered about the ceremony of coronation neither for Michael nor for Leon the Armenian, who usurped the throne after two years and later deposed the patriarch. André Grabar interpreted the picture to imply that Michael is crowning Leon emperor. But nothing of the kind ever took place. The conclusion is, *prima facie*, that the miniaturist must have relied on other sources than Skylitzes.



Fig 2 Michael I Rangabe crowning his son Theophylaktos co-emperor, fol 10 v

Skylitzes' primary source for the early period of his chronicle is Theophanes, the famous historian of the 9th century. This author has a more vivid sense for the details of ceremonies and provides rather precise and illustrative descriptions of the coronation ceremony. No details, however, are given about Michael's coronation – how he first was brought to the Hippodrome early in the morning and more or less against his will was proclaimed emperor by the restless army, the senate and the people. The elevation on the shield in Byzantium was at Skylitzes' time only a sheer ritual formality, having lost its early direct military implication. After the acclamation he was brought to Saint Sophia, dressed in the imperial attire, where he was finally crowned by the patriarch, who had the duty to make sure that the new emperor really confessed the true Orthodox faith.

We may conclude that two elements have been confused: the elevation on the shield, which, as is implied, was taking place in the Hippodrome and the coronation ceremony, which was later carried through in Saint Sophia, where the patriarch acted as intercessor of the divine. Sometimes in connection with the *prokypsis* ceremony, with the imperial family appearing on a high tribune to the people. The Varangians used to stand on guard beneath. On this shield two emperors are represented simultaneously who in reality were never elevated together. Co-emperors were not elevated on shields. The normal way of representing this ceremony is seen in the famous Greek manuscript Parisinus 139, fol 6 v from ca 975 (fig 3) showing David on the shield. The ceremony has changed its symbolic content and lost its military implication. Originally the person who was chosen emperor by the soldiers in the field was elevated on a shield and acclaimed. In this version the imperial family and the dignitaries of the state have definite places in the picture. Later, in Theophanes' relation, it is reported that Michael crowned his Empress Prokopia Augusta and his elder son Theophylaktos co-emperor. The two figures on the image seem a priori to represent an emperor and his co-emperor according to the established scheme showing the imperial family crowned by Christ. At closer inspection the two figures reveal a difference of age. The figure to the right might well be father of the figure to the left. Also the somewhat different costumes reveal that the older one is wearing the particular coronation equipment, *divitision*, *sakkos* and *chlamys*, while the younger one wears the costume of an emperor in majesty, a golden *sakkos* and *loros*. Also the nimbus differentiates

the status. The main emperor has a purple/red and the co-emperor a blue nimbus. The blue colour is associated to caesars and Sebastocrators, who were closest in rank to the emperor.



Fig 3 David on the shield, Par. Gr. 139, fol 6 v, dated 975, photo: Bibliothèque nationale, Paris

A dramatic incident demonstrating how Nordic custom is maintained in Byzantium is shown in fol 208 (fig 4). Scandinavian Varangian mercenaries of the imperial army were campaigning in Thrace, as far as one can understand under their own command. A drunken Varangian soldier tried to violate a married woman, who like an Amazon defended herself with her husband's knife and killed the offender. The Varangian troupe now holds a *thing*, a courtroom, and decide according to Scandinavian law (Adamus Bremensis relates that rape of a maiden or married woman was punished with execution). The woman is accordingly awarded the inheritance of the dead soldier. To the left we see the woman killing with a lance instead of a knife, as the source says, and to the right she inherits the possessions of the Varangian.



Fig 4 A Greek woman killing a Varangian who has offended her, fol 208



Fig 5 Siamese twins shown in the Mese, fol 131 b and c

On fol 131 b and c (fig 5) we see a vivid every-day picture from the streets of Constantinople, as spectacular as the images on current evening newspapers. Along the main boulevard, the Mese, surrounded by arcaded porticos with statues on its roofs we see a slave running to the hospital with a pair of Siamese twins in his arms noticed by a group of dignitaries. On the next picture one of the twins has died and the surgeon is failing to separate their bodies.

A glimpse of the university life in Constantinople is given on fol 134 (fig 6), where eight students are sitting around pulpits with open books and a teacher is lecturing and three students approach two seated philosophers. The scene is from the time of Constantine VII Porphyrogenos, who used to attend to the university lectures and take personal interest in the students.



Fig 6 University life in Constantinople, fol 134



Fig 7 Masons at work, fol 141 v a

Masons at work on building a palace for Romanos I Lecapenos is seen on fol 141 v a (fig 7). A marble ox's head was found and taken as the cause of an epidemic.

Danielis, a female entrepreneur from Patras who runs a silk factory of silk, *sidonia erga*, and the owner of 3000 slaves, supported Basileios I in his campaign to become emperor. On fol 102 a (fig 8) she is carried by eight slaves on her way to Constantinople to make a visit to the court.



Fig 8 Danielis, a female silk entrepreneur on her way to Constantinople, fol 102 a



Fig 9 The ecumenical patriarch Methodios I demonstrating his mutilated genitalia, fol 66

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In 843, when the veneration of icons was again permitted, the reinstallation of the icon cult had an interesting postlude in the miniatures. The iconoclast patriarch John VII the Grammarian, who dealt in magic, was deposed and replaced by the Orthodox patriarch Methodios I (843-847). In order to try to eliminate his successor and regain his former position, John bribed a woman who accused the new patriarch of sexual offences. He defended himself by lifting up his *sticharion* and demonstrating his mutilated genitalia on fol 66 (fig 9), a device not dispensable to men today who are unjustly accused of rape.

Nowhere does Byzantium come so close to us as in the illuminations of this chronicle in all its sublimity and degradation.

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Skylitzes Matritensis Family Page Ceremony and Sacrament

On our way through the Skylitzes manuscript we will start with the most magnificent illuminations that can be referred to the theme of ceremony, e.g. coronations, the prokypsis, the sacrament of baptism, marriage, and the exposition on *lit de parade* after the last unction has been spent.

The coronation

The coronation, which is the climax of the imperial ceremony of the accession to the throne, *stepsimon*, is an integral part of a ceremonial whole including the *sine qua non*, the acclamation of the people and of the dignitaries – no emperor can be accepted without the people's consent –, the elevation on the shield, banquets, games on the Hippodrome and the dispensation of the holy unction. From the time of Julian the Apostate in the 360s A.D., the soldiers crowned their pretendent to the throne in the open field by putting a *torques*, or necklace, on his neck and elevating him on a tribunal shield and acclaiming him. From the 5th century on, the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople took an active part in the coronation ceremony. The coronations changed place at that time from the secluded Hebdomon, a suburb of Constantinople, to the more popular open Hippodrome. Still as late as 776 Constantine VI was crowned co-emperor on the Hippodrome between the ceremonies taking place in Hagia Sophia. From 641 on when Constans II was crowned co-emperor, the coronation took place at the ambo in Saint Sophia and the ceremony was usually performed in connection with great church festivals such as Christmas or Easter.

Before the procession to Hagia Sophia a reception was arranged for the dignitaries and the circus parties, the Blue and the Green, in the Sacred Palace. Later the ecumenical patriarch crowned the emperor at the ambo in the cathedral and the people acclaimed him. He entered a tribune and received the proskynesis of the dignitaries. The former emperor crowned the empress and his co-emperors. The empress was either crowned in the Augusteion, an enclosed open square to the south of Saint Sophia, or in the chapel of St Stephanos in the Daphne palace. She made proskynesis in front of the crowning emperor.

During the Paleologue era the emperor first publicly recited the Nicene creed in order to testify to his faithfulness to Orthodoxy and was then elevated on a triumphal shield and acclaimed. Enthroned on a platform of wood in Saint Sophia he received the imperial garment, the sakkos and the imperial crown. He was then crowned and acclaimed at another time. The coronation was inserted in a usual liturgy. After that followed the prokypsis ceremony where the imperial family appeared to the public on an elevated tribune. On the occasion of the coronation ceremony large amounts of money were spent on the clergy of Saint Sophia, on the dignitaries and on the imperial army.

The scenes of coronation that adorn the Skylitzes manuscript in this second version from the 12th century are neither contemporary images nor reminiscences of the particular events but later reconstructions illustrating the running historical text.

On fol 10 v (fig 2) we see Emperor Michael I Rangabé (811-813) crowning his son Theophylaktos co-emperor and who is elevated on the same shield and acclaimed. They are surrounded by dignitaries in magnificent costumes and in the background stand eight horn-players. Theophylaktos is dressed completely in gold, in *loros*, the imperial girdle, and sakkos, and has a blue nimbus while the main emperor has a red nimbus and a blue sakkos without sleeves, the same costume that nowadays is worn by the orthodox bishop. The event ought to have taken place on the Hippodrome but lacks realism as it never occurred that two emperors were elevated on the same shield.

On a glorious image of a parade on fol 12 v (fig 10), which is authentically Byzantine, we see emperor Leon V the Armenian, with a drawn uncoloured nimbus (813-820), seated on a lyre-shaped throne (to which Anthony Cutler has devoted a study) surrounded by the devoted dignitaries, those closest to him

wearing headgear. Behind them the protospatharians, who protect the life of the emperor, stretching out their hands and holding long spears.



Fig 10 Leon V the Armenian in majesty, fol 12 v

The third pompous image on fol 42 v a (fig 11) shows how Emperor Theophilos (829-842), in loros and sakkos, is enthroned as emperor on a lyre-shaped throne adorned with pearls and precious stones and with a golden nimbus around the open imperial crown. Closest to him stand two protospatharioi with high spears and floating dibellia, the imperial standard. There is a great crush of people in the surrounding groups of dignitaries who all wear white hats of varying forms. These hats correspond to the *skaranikon* of the Paleologue era. In the texts no headgear is mentioned for dignitaries at this time, however, and therefore their designation is unknown. Headgear and hats are important distinguishing attributes for different ranks within the imperial bureaucracy.

A certain Basilikinos is crowned co-emperor on fol 80 v (fig 12) by the illustrious ecumenical patriarch Photios (858-67, 877-86), the future Basileios I (867-86), the founder of the Macedonian dynasty on the 26 May 866. To the right Emperor Michael III (842-67) raises his right arm in order to show that it happens on his command. As a reward Basileios had Emperor Michael assassinated on the 23/24 September 867.

In a bipartite scene read from left to right a girl called Anne, daughter of Gabalas, is first crowned empress and then married to Stephanos, the son of Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (920-44) on fol 129 v (fig 13). A scene with value perspective on fol 133 v b (fig 14) shows Romanos II, the son of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, crowned co-emperor in Hagia Sophia by the ecumenical patriarch Polyuktos (956-70). Romanos is exaggeratedly small in proportion to his father. This artist is evidently not a Greek but a barbarian. The same Emperor Romanos II (959-63) is crowned emperor and his brother Basileios co-emperor in Hagia Sophia by the ecumenical patriarch Polyuktos on fol 139 v (fig 15).



Fig 11 Theophilos in majesty, fol 42 v a (on the front page)



Fig 12 Basilikinos, the future Basileios I, crowned co-emperor, fol 80 v



Fig 13 Anne, daughter of Gabalas, crowned empress and married to Stephanos, son of Romanos I Lekapenos, fol 129 b



Fig 14 Romanos II crowned co-emperor, fol 133 v b



Fig 15 Romanos II and Basileios crowned emperor and co-emperor, fol 139 v

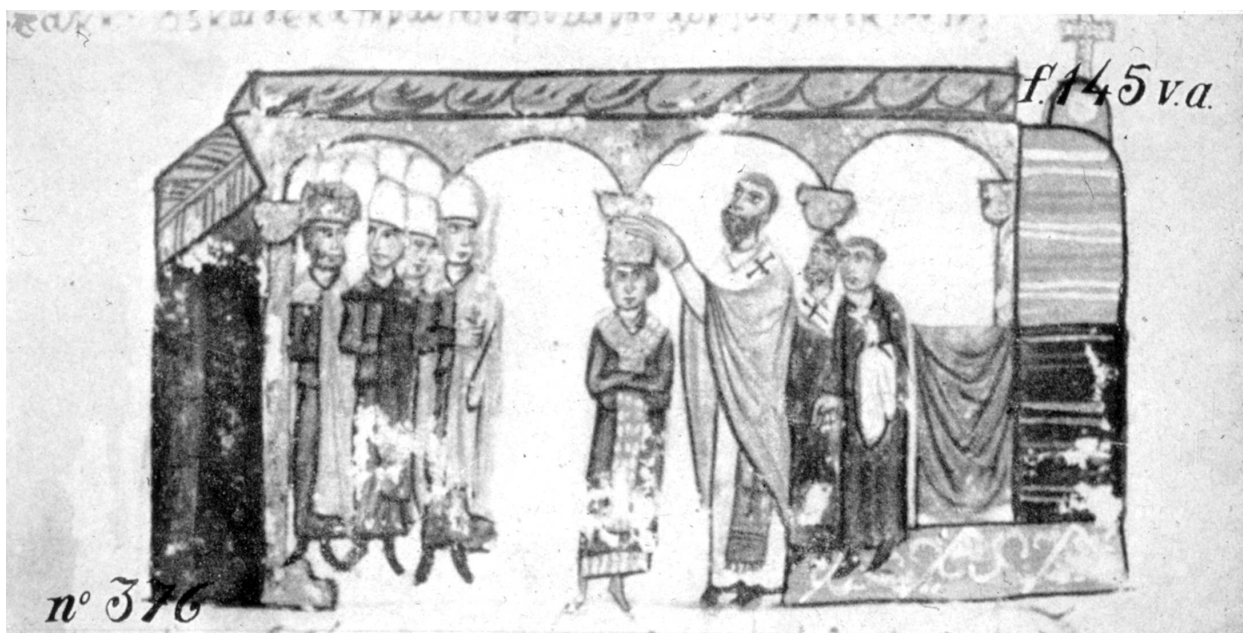


Fig 16 Nicephoros II Phokas crowned emperor, fol 145 v a

On the 16 August 963 Nicephorus II Phokas (963-69) is crowned by the ecumenical patriarch Polyeuktos. This event is mirrored on fol 145 v a (fig 16). This emperor also had an extremely cruel fate, seen on fol 157 v a (fig 17), where his decapitated head is shown to the people outside the palace. He was assassinated by his successor, the future Emperor John I Tzimiskes, in his bedchamber on the instigation of Empress Theophanu during the night between December 10 and 11, 969.



Fig 17 The head of Nicephoros II Phokas shown to the people, fol 157 v a



Fig 18 Peter Deleanus of Macedonia elevated as king, fol 213

A scene imitating Byzantine ceremonial shows Peter Deleanus, grandson of King Samuel of Macedonia (976-1014), who is proclaimed king in a situation that should correspond to the elevation on a shield on fol 213 (fig 18). The blazing red colour of the Macedonians' caps emphasizes that they are barbarians.



Fig 19 Leon Thornikios' revolt, elevated on a shield, fol 230 a

During the reign of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) Leon Thornikios made an unsuccessful revolt in 1046 as a usurper and had himself crowned by the army. He is elevated on a triumphal shield by two eunuchs and is acclaimed by the surrounding soldiers on fol 230 a (fig 19). Far to the left a magnificent tent-like form is seen, an imperial tent. None of the imperial tents were preserved but we can get an idea of the luxury by studying relics of preserved magnificent Ottoman tents.

The prokypsis

The prokypsis was an imperial ceremony that was displayed in connection to coronations and weddings on a wooden platform with a curtain. The curtain was drawn and a spotlight lit up the imperial family in front of the public assembled below the palace guards, Varangians, high dignitaries and priests, who sang the polychronion and other hymns.

On fol 227 a (fig 20) is shown how at the celebration of the feast of the Forty Martyrs in March 1044 the imperial women appeared in a prokypsis ceremony, to the left Skleraina, the young and beautiful imperial mistress, a niece of Constantine's second wife, and the Empress Zoë and the nun Theodora and their sister Euphrosyne, who lived in the shadow as a nun since her face was destroyed by smallpox. Below to the right Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos tries to calm an enraged crowd of people protesting against Skleraina's presence at the court.

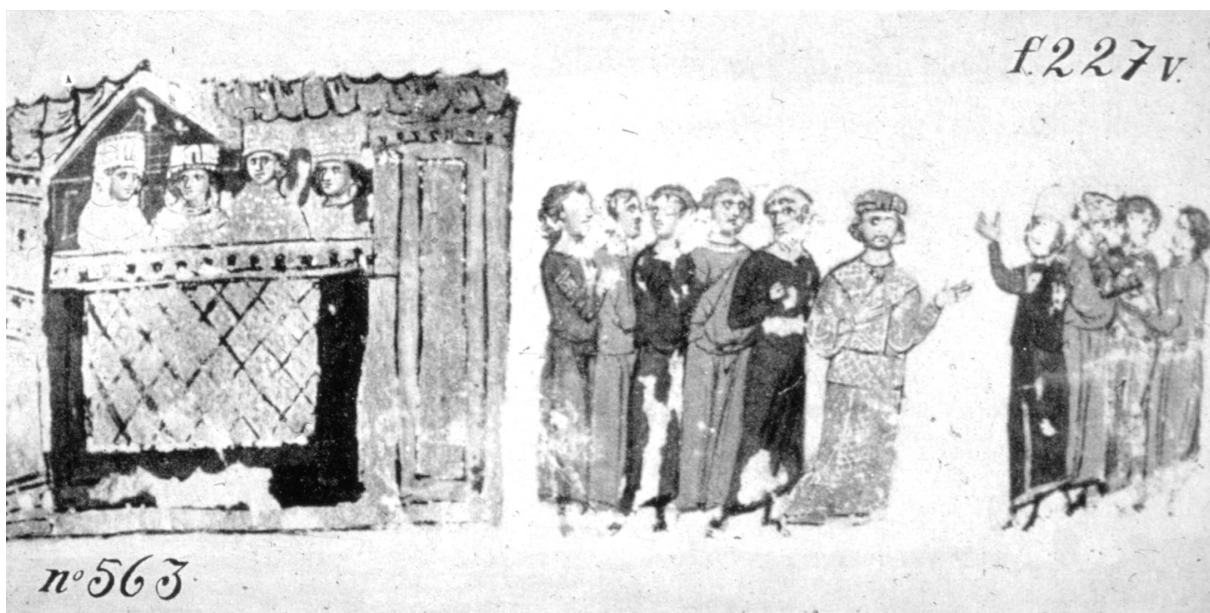


Fig 20 Imperial women in prokypsis, fol 227 v

Baptism

The first Christian sacrament, baptism, was preceded by the catechumenate, the teaching of catechism. It took place in the baptistery at the Eastern vigil. In Constantinople it was usually arranged at Epiphany, on Lazarus' Saturday or at Pentecost, because of its symbolism of resurrection and rebirth. In the 7th century we know that children were instructed for three years as catechumens. On Eastern Saturday during the Holy Week when the parish celebrated vigil in Hagia Sophia and texts about baptism were recited from the Bible, the patriarch blessed the baptismal font in the great baptistery and presbyters and deacons anointed the candidate with holy chrism. The neophytes dressed in white as a sign of sinlessness proceeded into the nave to psalm Ps 31: "To Thee Oh Lord I take refuge" and the baptismal tropary Gal 3, 27: "for You all who have been baptized in Christ, have been vested by Christ" and then the Alleluia and finally the Holy Easter Eucharist was administered.



Fig 21 Baptism of Boris I of Bulgaria in 864, fol 68 v



Fig 22 Baptism of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, fol 112 b

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On the image on fol 68 v (fig 21) King Boris I of Bulgaria (852-889) is baptized in 864 by immersion into a large vat by a priest, who, according to the legend, was identical to the monk Methodios, who, together with the holy Cyrillos, were missionaries in Bulgaria and Russia and created the Cyrillic alphabet. On fol 112 b (fig 22) the ecumenical patriarch Nicolaos Mystikos (901-07, 912-25) is baptizing a chubby baby who represents the future emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, the offspring of Leon VI's fourth marriage, born 905, son of the beautiful Zoë Karbonopsina. He was baptized on the condition that the emperor would distance himself from his mother. Instead, three days later the emperor married her and elevated her to the dignity of Augusta. The patriarch then forbade the emperor to enter Hagia Sophia. Leon turned to the pope of Rome who gave him dispense and consequently the enforced abdication of Nicolaos Mystikos was the result.

Marriage

It is sometimes difficult to separate the wedding scene from the coronation scene. At the wedding, simple crowns of metal were used which the patriarch put on the heads of the conjoined and removed before the blessing. It is difficult to separate the imperial *stemma* from the bridal crown *stephanos*. The marriage consisted of betrothal and coronation, *stephanoma*. First a prayer was read called *synapte*, then another three prayers and finally the coronation took place. Then followed the reading of the ektene litany, another prayer and again the *synapte*. After the Our Father, another prayer, a ritual procession, the crowns were removed and thereupon the married couple were blessed and a final prayer was read.

A second marriage was possible but a third marriage was seen with ill will and connected to epitimion, a ceremony of penance. The bridal couple held each other by the right hand as a sign of *concordia, dextrarum iunctio*, a late antique custom. In the scene with Zoë and Michael IV the Paphlagonian below, the wedding crowns are united with long bands.



Fig 23 Theophobos' marriage and adoption by emperor Theophilos, fol 53 v

The ecumenical patriarch is seen on fol 53 v (fig 23) putting the wedding crowns on a young couple. The woman dressed as an empress is the sister of either the emperor Theophilos or of his consort Empress Theodora. The husband named Theophobos is of Persian or Kurdish origin and has fled to Byzantium and adopted the Christian faith. He is elevated to the rank of patrikios by the emperor and wears a closed chlamys. The wedding takes place in Hagia Sophia as indicated by the dome rising over their heads. To the right Theophobos is seen in a ceremony of adoption by the emperor, where he gets the permission to sit on his knee.

A short-lived connection between east and west was the result of the betrothal between Romanos I Lekapenos and the daughter of King Hugo of Provence, Berta Eudoxia. She died however after five years.

The couple standing in an arcade on fol 130 v (fig 24) is somewhat smaller than the rest of the attendants. To the left is a group of dignitaries in headgear of different colours and to the right stand priests from the ecclesiastical hierarchy.



Fig 24 Romanos I Lekapenos married to Berta Eudoxia, fol 130 v

On fol 185 b (fig 25) a wedding takes place between a Greek named Asotios, son of Gregorios Taronites, who is elevated to the dignity of patrikios, and the daughter of King Samuel of Macedonia, who receives the dignity of first lady at the court, *zoste*. This scene is arranged in Dyrhachion.

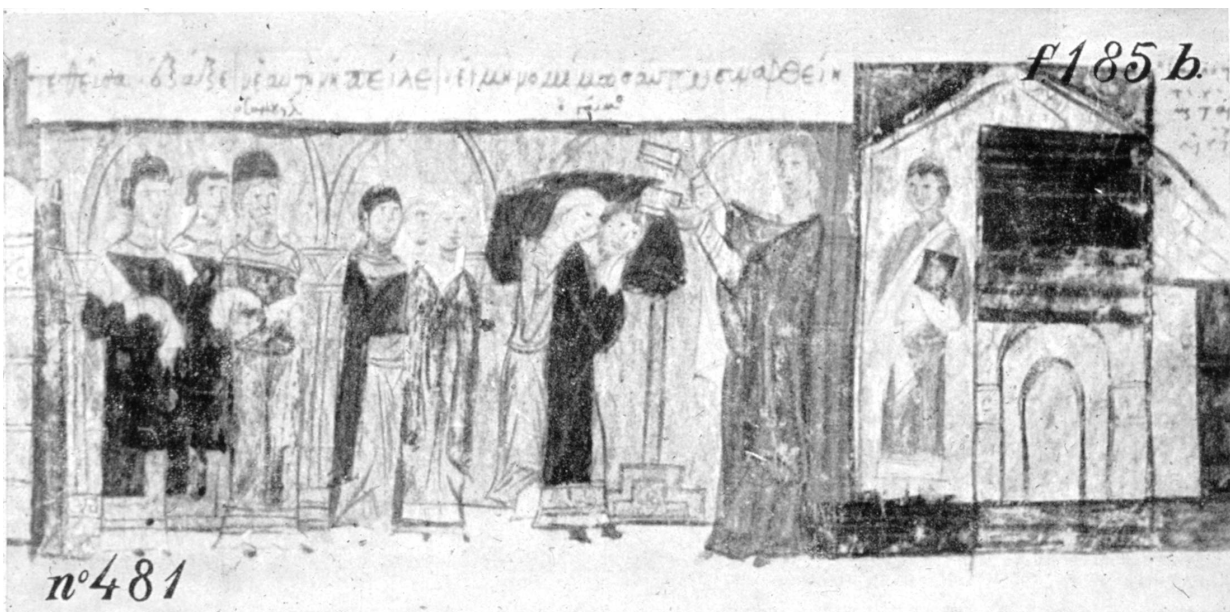


Fig 25 Asotios married to the daughter of King Samuel of Macedonia, fol 185 b

On fol 125 b (fig 26) is seen how Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos is married to Helen, the daughter of his rival emperor Romanos I Lekapenos, by the ecumenical patriarch Nicolaos Mystikos.



Fig 26 Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos married to Helen, fol 125 b

The next image is the beginning of a criminal story. There, on fol 128 v (fig 27), the infertile Zoë is united in a forced marriage to the eparch Romanos Argyropoulos, who had to choose between having his eyes put out or to accept the imperial dignity and send his devoted wife to a monastery. Romanos III Argyros reigned between 1028-1034 and made important decorations in Hagia Sophia in mosaic. The officiating ecumenical patriarch is Alexios Studites (1025-43). At the side to the left we catch a glimpse of Zoë's sisters, the nuns Theodora and Euphrosyne. Romanos was poisoned over a long time and finally murdered by drowning in the palace bathroom by servants who were bribed the day after the regular distribution of salary in gold, the *rhoga*, on the 11 April 1034, seen on fol 206 v (fig 28). In the evening of the same day Empress Zoë married her young lover, who ascended to the throne under the name of Michael IV (1034-41).



Fig 27 Zoë married to Romanos Argyropoulos, fol 128 v



Fig 28 Romanos III Argyros drowned, fol 206 v

In a basilica in the Sacred Palace in Constantinople on fol 206 v (fig 29) the wedding between Michael the Paphlagonian and Empress Zoë in 1041 is depicted. Patriarch Alexios Studites connects the wedding crowns with a band. Michael holds Zoë's left hand in *dextrarum iunctio*. Zoë's final wedding with Constantine IX Monomachos on fol 222b (fig 30) is again put on the stage by the same ecumenical patriarch Alexios Studites on the 11 June 1042. To the left we see a glimpse of Theodora as nun in black costume. The wedding was only a formality. The emperor brought with him to the palace his beautiful mistress Skleraina and the whole arrangement was with Zoë's consent a *mariage à trois*.



Fig 29 Zoë married to Michael IV the Paphlagonian, fol 206 v



Fig 30 Zoë married to Constantine IX Monomachos, fol 222 b

Lit de parade

The corps was washed with warm water mixed with wine and spices and was anointed with perfumed chrism. Before death the last unction was administered. The corpse was dressed in a garment or vestment. If it was an emperor, he was dressed in divitision, golden chlamys and kampagia, imperial shoes, and the imperial crown was put on his head and he was laid on *lit de parade* with the face toward the East in the triclinium of the Nineteen Coaches on a golden bed with the hands crossed over the breast. He was surrounded with candelabras and incense. Before the body was put into the sarcophagus the imperial crown was substituted by a diadem of linen. High dignitaries and priests from Hagia Sophia and the whole senate, dressed in skaramangion, appeared to take leave and a liturgy was performed. At the end the praipositos made a sign to the master of ceremonies and exclaimed: "Get on Your way Emperor! Now the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords calls You!" Monks and priests appeared in the narthex of the church at the *lit de parade* in their liturgical vestments.



Fig 31 Michael II Traulos on *lit de parade*, fol 42 a

Michael II Traulos (the Stutterer 820-29) the founder of the Amorian dynasty, lies on *lit de parade* on fol 42 a (fig 31). He took a reserved attitude in the struggle over images and forbade discussions on the topic. On one folio page there are three pictorial series that illustrate the leave-taking from life of Emperor Leon VI (886-912). On the picture above fol 116 v (fig 32) he already lies on *lit de parade* in imperial pomp in the triclinium of the Nineteenth Couches, surrounded by relatives and dignitaries who have bare heads and a closed chlamys. On the image below, fol 116 v a (fig 33) which is very ornamented, not least with the Byzantine arabesque and mushroom ornaments that we find in the murals of Garde church on Gotland, the relatives take leave of the dying emperor. His brother Alexander, Empress Helen and his son, the future Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, stand beside his bed and to the left appears a group of senators. On the picture at the bottom of the same folio the two newly crowned emperors Alexander and his co-emperor Constantine are seated on thrones. It is an interesting picture as the Russian Grand prince Oleg concluded a peace treaty with these two emperors in 912 through diplomatic intermediation by Nordic Varangians.



Fig 32 Leon VI on *lit de parade*, fol 116 v

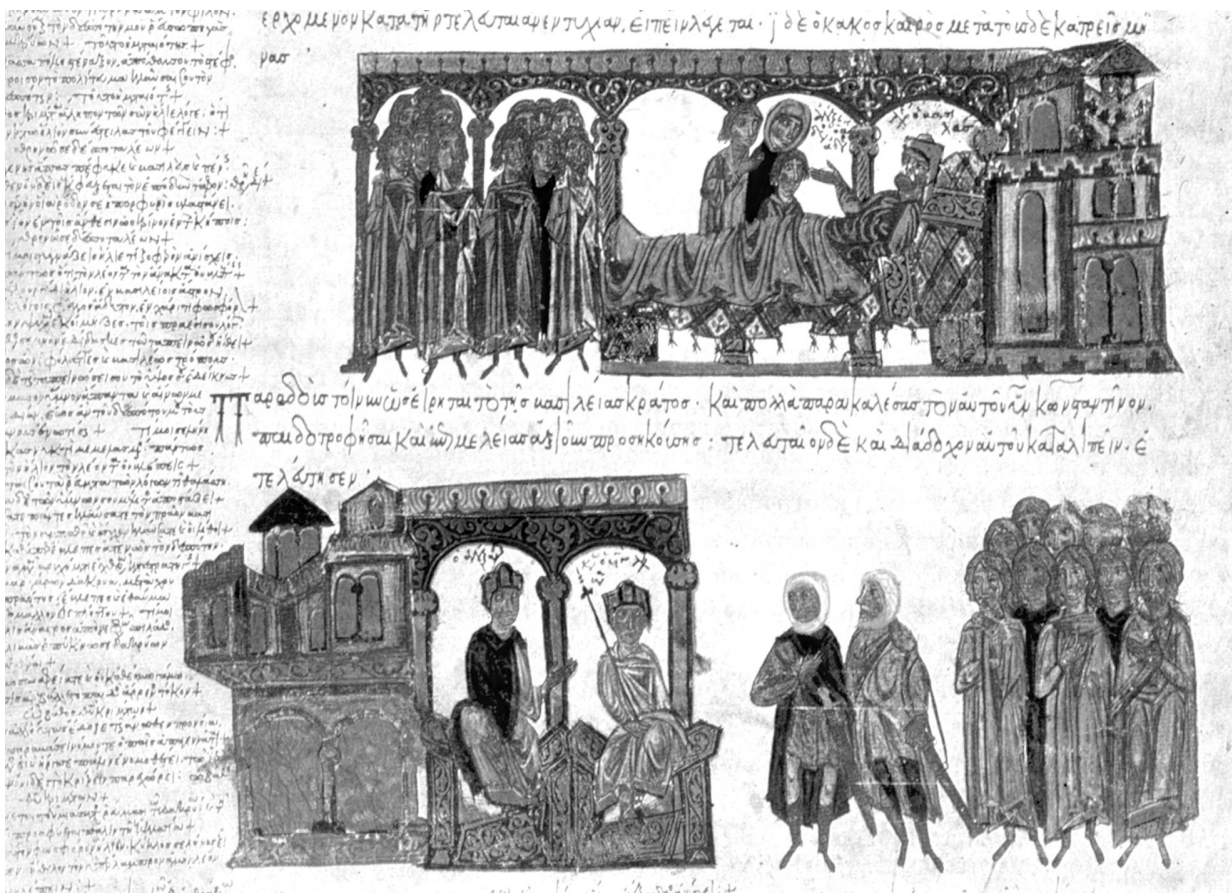


Fig 33 Leon VI dying, fol 116 v a

On fol 127 b (fig 34) the ecumenical patriarch Stephanos II of Amaseia (925-27) is lying on *lit de parade*. He died on 15 July 927. A group of painters who lack Byzantine background have specialized on images of members of the imperial family on *lit de parade* in a simplified trivial style that looks Arabic. The co-emperor Christophoros, son of Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos, lies on *lit de parade* on a bed with chequered bed-covers and a turban-like cap on his head in his father's monastic institution on fol 127 v b (fig 35). Other examples are the representations of Romanos I Lekapenos' death on 15 June 948 on fol 133 v a (fig 36) on the island of Prote where he was exiled by his sons at the end of his life as a monk, and Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos' death 959 shown on fol 139 a (fig 37).

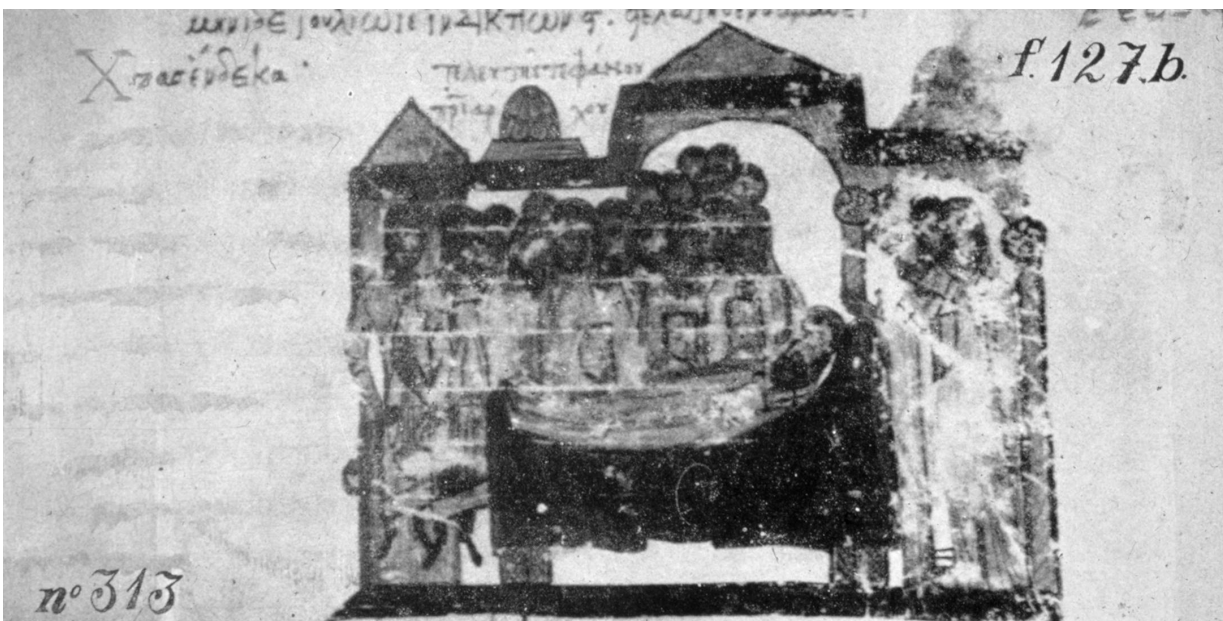


Fig 34 The ecumenical patriarch Stephanos of Amaseia on *lit de parade*, fol 127 b



Fig 35 Co-emperor Christophoros, son of Romanos I Lekapenos on *lit de parade*, fol 127 v b



Fig 36 Romanos I Lekapenos on *lit de parade*, fol 133 v a



Fig 37 Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos on *lit de parade*, fol 139

Against these scenes contrasts the rich image of the latter emperor's consort Empress Helen's death on fol 141 v c (fig 38) that imitates a Koimesis scene with the Dormition of the Mother of God, where Helen is surrounded by three ladies and three gentlemen. The two emperors Constantine VII and Romanos II are seated on thrones to the left. Romanos' death is depicted on fol 142 b (fig 39), it occurred on 15 March 953.



Fig 38 Empress Helen on *lit de parade*, fol 141 v c

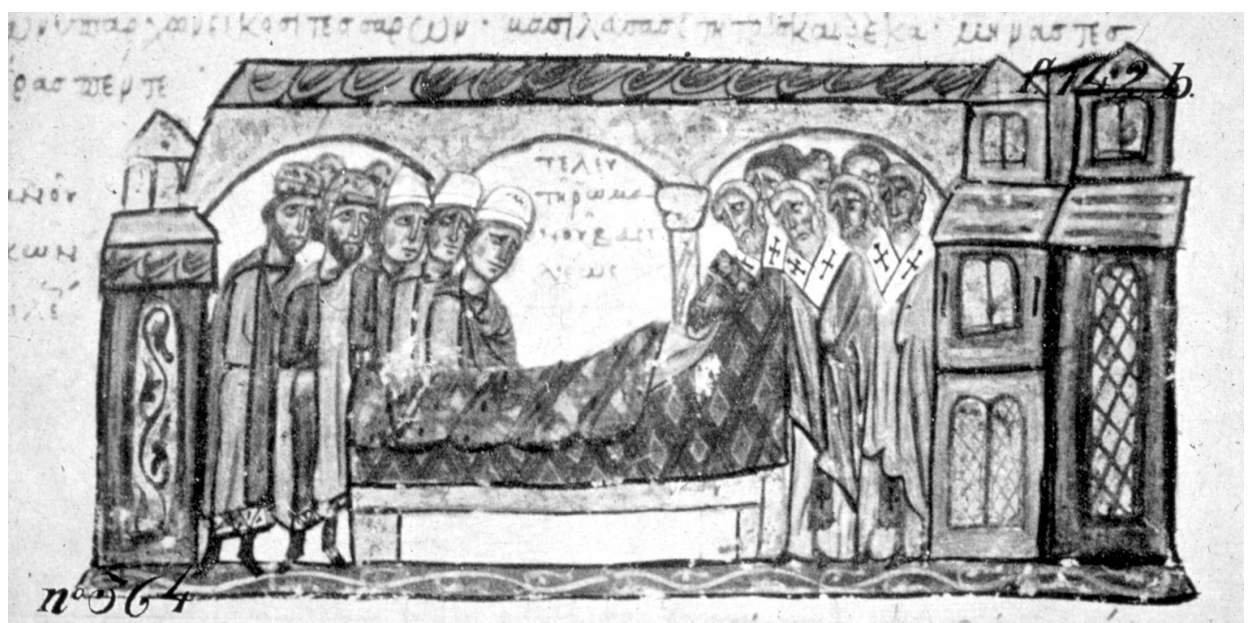


Fig 39 Romanos II on *lit de parade*, fol 142 b



Fig 40 Cubicularian Joseph Bringas on *lit de parade*, fol 145 v b

Finally, a more classical Byzantine scene with the cubicularian and eunuch Joseph Bringas on *lit de parade* on fol 145 v b (fig 40) in a monastery church in Asekretis in Pythia. He was prime minister during the reign of Romanos II (959-63) and Theophanu. The picture is beautiful and reminds of representations of the Cappadocian church father Basileios the Great on *lit de parade*. He is surrounded by candelabras and incense.

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Skylitzes Matritensis and Iconoclasm

The Skylitzes manuscript is outspokenly in favour of sacred images. It includes the time when iconoclasm, the struggle against sacred images ruled the imperial policy, from ca 726 or 730 to 843, with short interruptions ca 787 and 815. The war started with the demolition of the large icon of Christ in demi-figure over the entrance portico to the Sacred palace, the Brazen House, the *Christ Chalkites*.

On fol 131 (fig 41) Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos received the miracle-working towel from Edessa, the *mandylion*, the Holy Face of Christ. It was brought by the military commander Ioannes Courkoas from the besieged city in 944 and placed in the chapel of Pharos.



Fig 41 Romanos I Lekapenos receives the Holy Mandylium from Edessa, fol 131



Fig 42 The female patrician Theoktiste holds an icon of Christ before the five daughters of Emperor Theophilos, fol 44 v

The female patrician Theoktiste, mother of Empress Theodora, the restorer of icon worship holds an icon of Christ to be kissed by the five daughters of the last iconoclast Emperor Theophilus on fol 44 v (fig 42).

On a series of illuminations icons are shown hanging on the facade of buildings, as on fol 114 r (fig 43) showing a Hodegetria on the portico of a palace, where Leon VI is taking an oath from Constantine Doukas. On fol 115 v a (fig 44) a mosaic icon of Christ is seen on the arcade of a church with five domes. In John I Tzimiskes' (969-76) triumphal procession through the streets of Constantinople, after the victory at Preslav over the Bulgarians in 971, a magnificent portable icon reproducing Christ of the Pain with a mourning Theotokos, the Mother of God and the dead Christ, is shown on fol 172 v a (fig 45). Below is seen how King Boris II was deprived of his royal insignia and dressed like a usual dignitary.



Fig 43 A Hodegetria on the portico of a palace, fol 114 r

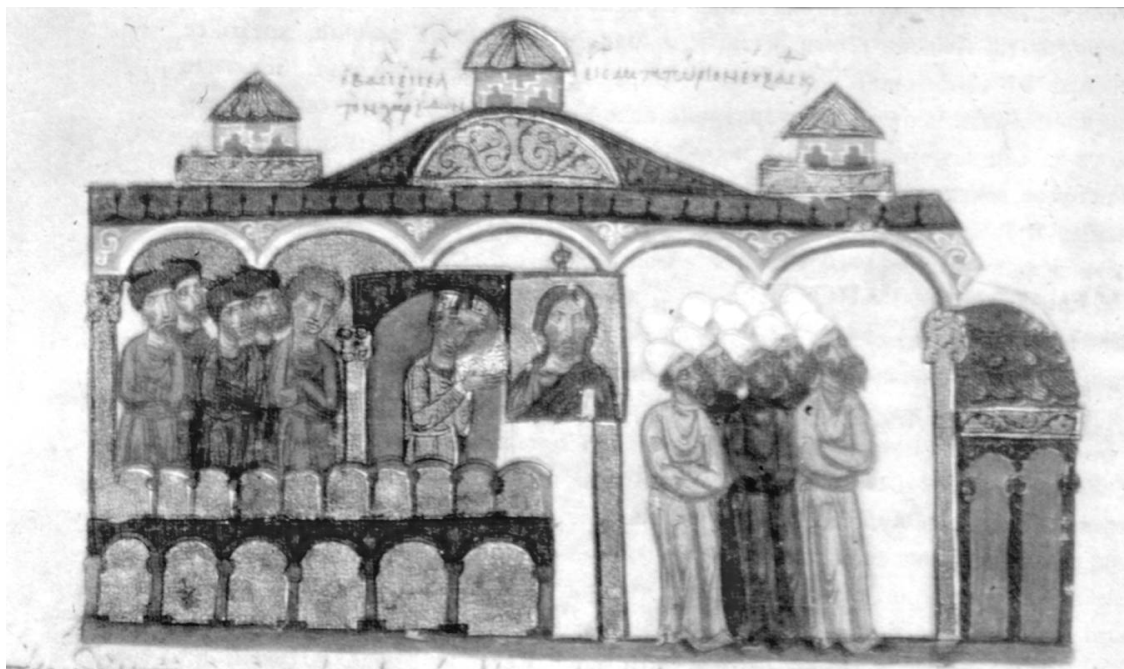


Fig 44 A Christ icon on the arcade of a church with five domes, fol 115 v a

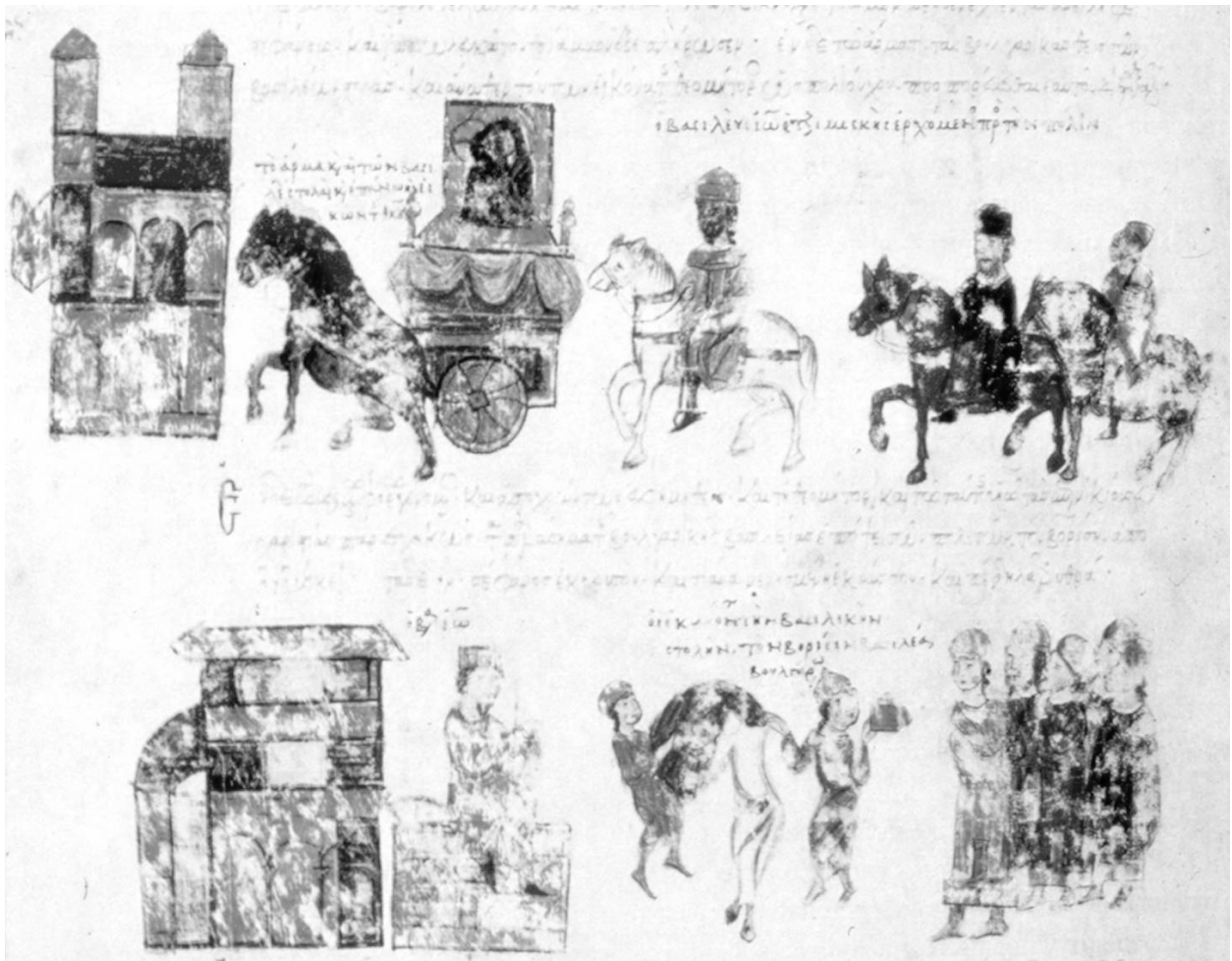


Fig 45 The icon of The Christ of Pain, brought in the triumphal procession of John Tzimiskes in 971, fol 172 v a



Fig 46 Empress Theodora and the tortured monk and icon painter Lazarus, fol 50 v a

Other important scenes are the images where Emperor Theophilos' widow Empress Theodora on fol 50 v a (fig 46) after the triumph of Orthodoxy in 843 tries to deliver him from guilt and puts herself in connection with the victims of his torture, of which the most famous is the painter monk Lazarus who lost his fingers. He was according to tradition given the important task to make a new Christ Chalkites in mosaic to replace the demolished one. Other victims are the two so-called *Graptoi*, monks from Palestine who had fled to Constantinople, Theodoros and Theophanes, who had iconoclastic inscriptions engraved with hot iron on their foreheads because they had quoted icon-friendly passages from the Bible in front of the emperor. After the victory of Orthodoxy Theophanes became metropolitan of Nicea. On another image on fol 50 v b (fig 47) we see a woman presiding over a church council – Empress Theodora, discussing the arguments of iconoclasm with the assembled clergy.



Fig 47 Empress Theodora presiding over a council, fol 50 v b

The most evil iconoclastic patriarch, John VII Grammatikos, called Iannis (837-43), is shown on fol 64 v a (fig 48) where a man is climbing a ladder in order to deprive a ciborium of its unusual *Dësis*, which in this case represents the Virgin and Christ surrounded by two archangels. Normally the *Dësis* represents Christ surrounded by the Virgin and John the Baptist in a scene of intercession for humanity. On another image, fol 65 (fig 49), the same patriarch is ordering the demolition of a naked male statue with three heads on a column on the Hippodrome.

In the Chludov psalter, 129 D, preserved in the State Historical Museum in Moscow, a monastic illuminated manuscript with ca 209 illuminations, most of them in the margin, dated ca 829 by Kurt Weitzmann, presumably originally illuminated in ink by the most famous victim of iconoclasm, the painter monk Lazarus, during the most cruel phase of iconoclasm as a provocative manuscript attributed to Constantinople, the drama of the war is demonstrated on images. There Simon Petrus is treading on Simon Magus, and the iconodule patriarch Nicephoros I (806-15) on John VII Grammatikos on fol 51 v (fig 50), who on another image is seen whitening over an icon of Christ in the form of a clipeus on fol 67 (fig 51) and thus contributes to crucifying Christ a second time. John is dressed as a dignitary in the function he had before he became an ecumenical patriarch.



Fig 48 John the Grammarian depriving a ciborium of its icons, fol 64 v a

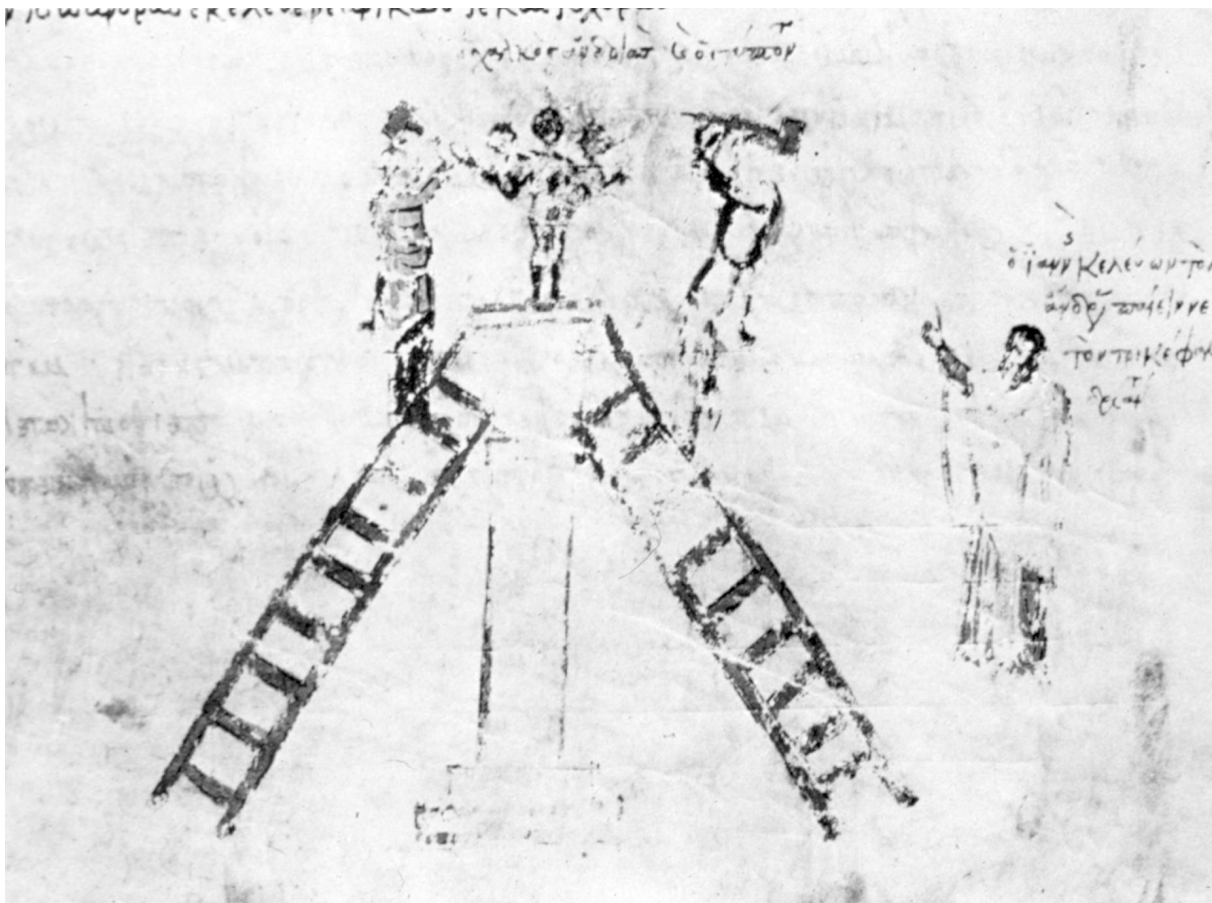


Fig 49 John the Grammarian demolishing a naked statue on the Hippodrome with three heads, fol 65



Fig 50 The ecumenical patriarch Nicephoros I treading on John the Grammarian, Chludov psalter 129 D, fol 51 v, 9th century, State Historical Museum, Moscow



Fig 51 The whiting over of an icon of Christ, Chludov psalter, fol 67

Iconoclasm was an offence against the Incarnation of the deity, a heresy, and therefore an unidentified emperor lies on his knees in proskynesis at the entrance of the naos, the nave, in a lunette in Hagia Sophia (fig 52), imploring Christ for forgiveness some time after 867, presumably Basileios I the Macedonian, who restored the cathedral after this grave schism.



Fig 52 An emperor in proskynesis in front of Christ, lunette in the endonarthex of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, ca 867

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Violence in Byzantium

Under this heading falls the institutionalized violence that takes its expression in war and penal codes and the spontaneous violence in the streets and markets.

Was Byzantium a dictatorship?

It could appear to be so, and as was so claimed by the outstanding Russian byzantinologist Aleksander Kazhdan, but in fact it was an autocracy. The preconditions for a dictatorship were lacking, as there were no mass media to suppress, and nobody could muzzle the priests.

I have found in Michael Prestwich's *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages – the English Experience* – a Western parallel which gives a relief to the image of Byzantium. I find that in Byzantium the penal system of the Hellenistic times, which concentrates on exile and the death penalty at a certain time during the Persian war in the 7th century in order to be confirmed during the Isaurians at the beginning of iconoclasm, absorbs elements from Hammurabi's codex, with mutilations and corporal punishments in place of the death penalty. It has to be pointed out that the same codex is a fundament of the Roman law and of its continuation in the modern legal system with counsel for the defence, court procedures in public, claims damages and appeal to a higher instance, and in comparison with the semitic legal system was very far advanced.

Greek Fire

I will start with the spectacular phenomenon in Byzantium, which was an excellent instrument of torture (as anybody who has ever had a burn will know), seen on fol 34 a b (fig 53). It is called in Greek *hygron pyr*, damp fire. The composition of Greek fire in its fluid form is, in principle, unknown. We know that it was a combustible means that flamed up at the touch of, for example, water, but it could also be used on land. This is testified by Anne Comnene in the *Alexias* XIII, III, 11 and in a passage in the *Tale of Haakon Haerdebred* that describes an episode of Alexios I Comnenos' (1081-1118) war against the Cumanians. Snorre Sturluson relates what I quote. Alexios is called Kirjalax, a Scandinavian pun that means *Kyrios Alexios*, Mr Alexios in Greek:

The emperor marched against the Cumanians, but on the plain of the Petchenegs [which does not here indicate the lower flow of Dnepr but its enormous width at Donau] he met a pagan king with an invincible army, the core of which was the cavalry and big tanks with firing towers [in other words the Roman war tactic]. The emperor sent forth Franks and Flemish soldiers who did not manage anything. Then it was suggested that he [like Christ at the wedding of Cana] should send forth his precious wine – the Varangians. The emperor however answered that he did not want to throw pearls in front of swine and send so few men irrespective of how brave they might be against an invincible army.

Tore Helsing, who at that time was chief of the Varangians, gave this answer to the words of the emperor: 'Even if there was a flaming fire [sc Greek fire] between us and the enemy I and my soldiers [he was evidently *lids forungz*] would immediately jump into it if I knew that it could lead to the result that You, Emperor, could thereafter rule in peace!' Then ask Olaf, Your holy King for assistance and victory, said Alexios. The Varangians who counted 250 men (e g two and

a half contingents] then took the oath and gave each other the handshake thereupon [the very essence of the word *väring*, ‘those who confirm an oath by shaking hands’] that they at their own cost and with the help of the godar [sc the priests] would build a church in Miklagaard and let it be consecrated to the glory and praise of their holy King Olaf. Thereupon they stormed out onto the plain and won victory.



Fig 53 Greek fire, fol 34 a b

Greek fire was first used in 516 during the reign of Anastasius I in the war with the Huns. It was invented by Proclus the Athenian and was later forgotten and reinvented by a Syrian named Kallinikos in the 7th century who lived among the Arabs in Baalbek. He was the Alfred Nobel of his time and managed to flee from Arab territory. Like the Danish atomic physicist Niels Bohr, who during the Second World War handed over the secret of the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union in order to create a balance of power, he brought with him the secret to emperor Constantine IV Pogonatos (the bearded) (668-685) in Constantinople. This emperor had particular ships constructed in the harbour of Sophien equipped with throwing machines that cast out the fire and they were used against the Moslem fleets after the year 672. This contributed in its turn to save the capital when it was besieged by the Arabs for five years and, in particular, it demonstrated its efficiency by setting fire to the easily flammable Russian *monoxyla* – the Varangian ships made of a single stock – which had repeatedly tried to take Constantinople. (This we know from Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos’ *administrando imperio* – an empire which also included Scandinavia according to Anne Comnene’s geographical division of the Roman Empire, in which she also refers to “the famous Thule and all people living in the North above which the north pole is situated” (*Alexiade* VI, XI, 2, ed Leib)).

According to an anonymous treaty from the 9th century, a variant of Greek fire would have consisted of a mixture of sulphur, saltpetre and naphtha oil with natrium. The expulsion, which was like a flash because the fluid was so volatile, took only an instant. The vigorous explosion when it was ignited, the detonation, the amount of smoke and the flash-like development was very frightening and caused panic in the enemy ranks. It is supposed that there were components in the explosive material which corresponded to modern gunpowder, and that it was the naphtha oil that burned on the water. The effects were terrible in many battles. It was particularly important for the outcome of naval battles and at sieges, when the wooden catapults were set on fire, but could not, of course, be used in high winds when there was a risk that the fluid could be blown backwards and the *siphones* themselves put on fire.

The long, flexible hoses, the so-called *siphones*, with the help of which the fire was expelled, were attached in the fore stem in the jaws of a gilt bronze lion. (In particular, transport ships were equipped with *siphones* in the bow as protection against assault.) These siphons were in some way connected with deep cauldrons of some kind into which the ends were dipped and which were filled with the explosive material. The propulsion fuel is not known but it is supposed that it was an explosive charge. The fluid was also sprayed out with the help of small, easily manipulated hand-grenades, *cheirosiphona*, which were ignited by natrium when they exploded. It is not yet known from where all the combustible material derived, but one ingredient, the naphta oil, most probably came from the coast of the Caspian Sea and Georgia, where it had been extracted since antiquity. Anne Comnene describes it as a combination of naphta, pitch and dry wooden chips (op cit IV, 5). Although all possible security measures were taken in Byzantium in order to preserve the secrets of Greek fire, the Arabs had already in the 9th century received knowledge of it, and the formula was also spread during the Crusades to the West.

Mutilations

Perhaps the most unacceptable form of penalty in Byzantium, which formally still exists in the Canon Law of the Orthodox church, is mutilation (although it is never sanctioned and the reason it still exists at all is because the church has not yet been able to assemble a pan-orthodox council for its reformation, although the practice has been struck out from the last edition produced in the 19th century. This is made clear by a judgement I have received from the Metropolitan of Stockholm and All Scandinavia, Professor Paulos Menevichoglou, expert on Canon law, who only uses spiritual punishments in his diocese. Mutilation was however still practised by the Russian Orthodox church in the 17th century during the Nikon schism).

Mutilation in its worst form, that of male genitalia, perhaps the expression of another type of ancient magic of manhood, was practised as a means of obtaining power and of keeping it. A whole corps of dignitaries in the most important administrative posts were eunuchs. In principle a man could not be consecrated priest if he was a eunuch, but the exceptions were many, particularly during Iconoclasm. The custom was evidently introduced into the administration from Persia in connection with Heraclius' victory at Dastagerd to a large degree and also occurred in China. It was practised in late antiquity, which is obvious from the fate of the church father Origenes, who mutilated himself in his youth and regretted it bitterly afterwards, when he was ordained priest and his adversaries denied him priesthood and the status of a saint. It is also hinted at in a saying by St Paul, who speaks of mutilation for the sake of heaven, if considered of free will, which is rather difficult to interpret. The mutilation we see to patriarch Methodios (fig 9) was practised in different degrees. Usually it occurred at the age of 8-9, immediately before puberty. In its worst form the genitalia were completely removed and the poor victim had to carry a funnel with him in order to be able to urinate. The physiological and psychological advantages were considered to outweigh the traumatic psychological effects. This also testifies to the levels of surgery at this time, as no source as far as I know complains about death resulting from the practice. From the reports from China of the Nobel prize winner Pearl Buck, we know that this custom still prevailed in China in the 19th century and that a tourniquet was applied around the waist during the operation and the genitalia were conserved and eventually put into the sarcophagus of the victim as a kind of fertility sacrifice.

One of the most prominent military commanders of the Emperor Iustinian I (527-565), Narses, was a eunuch. He distinguished himself through his cold-bloodedness and his psychological detachment. Steely, calculating intrigants (by reason of a certain psychological blunting) were needed both in public administration and in order to administer the *gynaikeion*. Iustinian's law codes expressly forbade the creation of eunuchs and for which the punishment was death (Corpus iuris civilis XXXXII *De eunuchis*).

Brehier, whom I often quote, writes in his *Institutions*: "Too often the streets were filled with different sorts of processions of prisoners condemned to death or to mutilation, *as a warning to others*, criminals, conspirators, most often of low rank who had been exploited by people of higher positions, riding backwards on donkeys while being whipped. Instead of escaping from these terrible scenes, the crowd stood staring at the procession and took an active part in the insults and demonstrated their feelings with taunts. The imperial princesses, who sometimes did not dare to show themselves openly, furtively looked at the cruel scene".

Iustinian's most prominent general, Belisarius, fell into disgrace and was blinded. The panegyric Procopius was his friend and that event might explain something of his later hatred for the emperor expressed in his libellous pamphlet *Anecdota*. Anne Comnene describes (op cit I, III, 1) a pretended blinding of a rebel called Oursel. He was thrown to the ground, the executioner approached him with the red-hot iron and the victim screamed and groaned like a roaring lion. Afterwards a white cloth was put over his eye sockets and he was led away (compare folio 217 v a, fig 54, where Peter Deleanus, the Macedonian king, is blinded). When Emperor Constantine V (741-775), who was an iconoclast, was once on a military expedition against the Bulgarians, the iconodule Artavastes, who was most probably a Persian, was proclaimed emperor by the army in Constantinople. When the legitimate emperor returned, Artavastes was deposed and blinded together with his sons and was shown in the imperial triumphal procession celebrated at the Hippodrome in 742.



Fig 54 Peter Deleanus of Macedonia blinded, fol 217 v a

Emperor Leon VI (886-912) deposed the famous ecumenical patriarch Photios in 886 and at the same time put out the eyes of the archbishop of Neocesarea. During the Bulgarian war in 1014, after the battle at the pass of Kimbalongo, Emperor Basileios II Bulgarochtonos (The Bulgar-Slayer) had the eyes put out of 15,000 Bulgarians and sent the army home with one, one-eyed strategos for each unit of a hundred soldiers. The tsar had a fit of apoplexy at this dreadful sight and died of shock. The Byzantine Empire reached at this time its absolute summit and now the Nordic Varangians started to play an important role in the domestic policy.

Romanos III, of the Argyropoulos family, was forced to marry the Macedonian princess Zoë under the threat of having his eyes put out. The same emperor was drowned on the 12 April 1034 in the bathtub in the palace bathroom, shown on fol 206 v (fig 28). Zoë remarried some hours later a stripling named Michael IV, the Paphlagonian, who finally died of epilepsy. Her next lover, Michael V (1041-1042), distanced himself from her as soon as he was installed on the throne. He provoked a revolt in 1042 when he sent the empress to the island of Principo and had her beautiful long hair cut off, and he was forced to seek asylum in the Studios monastery together with his uncle John. The two men had their eyes put out in the Sigma square and were interned in separate monasteries by the new and hastily installed empress, Theodora, Zoë's more energetic sister. This is seen in fol 221 (fig 55).

A military conspiracy during the reign of Michael VII Doucas (1071-78) tried to put Isaac Comnenos on the throne and Alexios I Comnenos' capable father looked for support from the strategos, the military commander of the Macedonian contingents in Cappadocia, Bryennios. The revolt failed however, Bryennios was captured and his eyes put out. He was sent in fetters to Constantinople. Romanos Diogenes, who also tried to revolt against Michael VII, was deposed and his eyes put out in 1072. He was deported to Prote, where he died under severe hardship. Nicephoros Diogenes had his eyes put out after an effort to revolt against Alexios I Comnenos in 1094, but he was rehabilitated as a blind man through Alexios' benevolence and was instructed by a professor in Greek literature and taught the secrets of geometry with the help of figures he could touch.

The governor of Philippopolis, Constantine Angellos, who had prevented the Bulgarians from invading Thracia, proclaimed himself emperor in 1193. He was stopped at Andrinople and blinded during the reign of Isaac II Angelos (1185-95). During his expedition against the Bulgarians, Isaac was himself the target of a military conspiracy by his own brother Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203, 1203-1204), who proclaimed himself emperor on the 3 April 1195, and imprisoned him and had his eyes put out. This did not, however, impede Isaac from regaining the throne, but he was again imprisoned on the 5 February 1204 by the usurper Alexios V Murzuphlos (1204), who let his guardian emperor Alexios IV (1203-1204) be strangled. Alexios V was himself murdered on the 13 April 1202, thrown from a high column, as the

victim of the Crusaders during their capture of Constantinople, which brought about the temporary ruin of the empire. John Doucas Vatatzes (1222-1254) prevented the Frankish invasion of 1224 by his victory at Poimananon. Among his prisoners were the brothers Laskaris. They had fled from Constantinople and had their eyes put out for security reasons.



Fig 55 Michael V and his uncle John blinded, fol 221

Perhaps the cruellest act of blinding was carried out by Michael VIII Paleologos (1259-1282) in a critical moment to ensure the stability of the government. He had recently, under hard resistance from the Franks, regained Constantinople and restored the empire in 1261. He then immediately imprisoned and put out the eyes of the legitimate successor to the throne, the young heir John Lascaris. Furthermore, and by way of example, mutilated his secretary, Manuel Holobolos, as a punishment because this man had shown sympathy for the innocent child victim. Holobolos was first blinded and then had his lips and nose cut off. The ecumenical patriarch Nicephoros II (1260-61) tried to excommunicate the emperor but the patriarch was deposed for his pains.

During the conflict of the Hesychasm, Gregorios Palamas was deemed guilty of heresy and thrown into jail by Anne of Savoy in 1345. Her son, John V Paleologos (1341-1391), who had recently officially converted to Catholicism in the Vatican, became the vassal of Sultan Murad in 1374. His son, the future Andronikos IV Paleologos (1376-1379), revolted in order to depose his father and involved himself in the conspiracy of Sultan Murad's son, Saudj. The plot was revealed in its initial stage and the sultan put out the eyes of his own son and ordered John V to punish his son in the same way. Thanks to the way it was carried out, Andronikos lost only one eye and his son John, who was still a child, was also only partially blinded. Andronikos and his family were kept in prison for two years.

Different kinds of atrocities

In 668 emperor Constans II (641-668) was murdered in his bathtub. In 694 the two favourite ministers of Justinian II (685-695) were burned alive, the eunuch and sacellarios Stephanos and the former monk and logothete in the Treasury Theodotos. At the same time the chief of the army, Leoncios, had his nose cut off. Justinian II himself was decapitated in 711.

The monk Stephen the Younger, the theologian, suffered martyrdom in 764. He is cut into pieces in a dramatic image from the Menologion of the first half of November preserved in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, Ms Grec 167, fol 187, from the 11th century (fig 56).



Fig 56 Stephen the Younger martyred, Ms Grec 167, fol 187, The Royal Library, Copenhagen

Monks were driven into exile and were imprisoned and mutilated by the iconoclast emperor Constantine V (741-775). When the martyrdom started in earnest the emperor let icon-friendly dignitaries and monks march past on the Hippodrome under defiling shouts of the mob. The ecumenical patriarch Constantine II (754-766) was deposed, shown on the Hippodrome, tortured and decapitated in 768. During the reign of the same emperor Michael Lakokondrakes, the strategos of the Thracians, let soldiers plunder a monastery of its icons on the very feast of the Koimesis 15 August 768, the Dormition of the Mother of God, and assembled one day monks and nuns on a place in Ephesus and forced them to choose between marriage or blinding. This event must be considered in the light of the contempt for monastic life reflected in the stories of Catholics in *A Thousand and One Nights*, and shows perhaps from where the Isaurians took inspiration for their iconoclasm. During Constantine V's triumph over the Bulgarians in 762, celebrated on the Hippodrome, Bulgarian prisoners were shown who were later executed. In 779 Emperor Leon IV (775-780) condemned five high dignitaries of the court to be flogged in public; they were accused of having secretly smuggled in icons to the apartment of the icon-friendly Empress Eirene (797-802).

The mime players sometimes took great liberties. One of them revealed to Emperor Theophilos (829-842) the inconsiderate action of the prefect Nicephoros who had confiscated a ship belonging to a widow, an episode told on fol 43 v a (fig 57). Theophilos had him arrested and burnt him alive in the middle of the Hippodrome to make an example.

Empress Eirene broke the engagement of her son Constantine VI (780-797) to the daughter of Charles the Great and forced him to marry an Armenian girl named Maria of rather low origin whom the eunuch Stavrakios had chosen in a so-called *bride-show*, the custom to let girls from the whole empire show themselves and answer questions, the medieval prototype of the selection for Miss Universe. It was a question of finding a beautiful and talented consort for the successor to the throne. When the poor Constantine protested against his mother in 790 the conspirators, who were iconoclasts, and also the emperor himself were arrested and flogged. In 797 after the icon-friendly council of ten years earlier, the Armeniacian thema or military district revolted and deposed Eirene as guardian empress. Constantine alone was now emperor. Eirene, however, responded by putting Stavrakios in prison and publicly flogging him.

After the unsuccessful attack on the Bulgarians an equally unsuccessful conspiracy was arranged against Constantine VI to make his uncle emperor. For his own security, Constantine cut out the tongues of four of his brethren and blinded the oldest, Nicephoros, and an official called Alexis Moseles. A revolt broke out among the Armeniacians. Constantine divorced Mary and married a woman from his mother's retinue. Following this he was deserted by his own followers, taken prisoner during an expedition against the Arabs, brought back to Constantinople and blinded in the same purple apartment in which he had seen the light of the day. His mother Eirene was now the sole occupant of the throne. She was a very devout icon-friend. In order further to secure her position she sent Constantine V's sons into exile to Athens and blinded his Slavonic field marshals in Hellas who agitated in their favour. The eunuch Stavrakios tried to depose her and died of fury when he failed in 801. Eirene was however deposed in 802 and exiled to the Princes Islands and Nicephoros I (802-811) and the icon-enemies strengthened their hold on the empire.

In 819 during the reign of the iconoclast emperor Leon V the Armenian (813-820), bishops and monks were imprisoned and maltreated, among others the illustrious chronicler Theophanes. Leon himself was murdered in the palace during the morning service, the *orthros*, seen on fol 26 a (fig 58). A Russian military commander called Thomas the Slavonian instigated a revolt and was handed over by the Bulgarians to Michael II the Amorian, who was called Beg the Stutterer, who executed him in 822.

Emperor Theophilos, after his accession to the throne in 829, executed the murderers of Leon the Armenian, an event seen on fol 43 v a (fig 57), because they, according to his opinion, had violated one Anointed by God, *Christon Kyrion*, a Greek pun that implies that the emperor was Christ's Vicar on earth. Emperor Theophilos was considered a strict judge, who wanted to find out for himself how things were, and



Fig 57 Theophilos executing the murderers of Leon V and comforting a widow, fol 43 v a



Fig 58 Leon V murdered during a liturgy, fol 26 a

who permitted all victims of injustices to refer directly to himself; every week he set out on horse to Blachernae, and publicly announced his summary punishments. Theophilos at the same time took up the persecutions against the iconodules, had a large amount of icons burnt, and filled the prisons with bishops, oppositional monks and icon painters.

During empress Theodora's regency for Michael III (842-867), who had started her reign by arranging a ceremony of penance and forgiveness for the outrages by her dead consort (which was naturally absurd, as he was a determined iconoclast and never repented), had the dromos logothete admiral Theoktistos arrested by her intrigant brother Bardas, who had far reaching plans for himself, treacherously in the palace and was murdered in prison in 856. In 867 Emperor Michael III was himself murdered by another dignitary called Bardas. Bardas made himself caesar, closest in rank after the successor to the throne, but was murdered in turn by the founder of the Macedonian dynasty Basileios I (867-886) in a palace in the quarter of St Mamas. During the reign of Basileios an Armenian sect, the so-called Paulicians, who had their own opinion about the dogma of Trinity, were kept in strict discipline. The emperor tried first to engage them on his side, but they supported the Arabs who were closer to them in their conception of God's nature. Their chieftain Chrysocheir, Goldhand, demanded fastidiously the whole of Asia Minor as a tribute. A domestikos tōn scholon, corresponding to the command in chief, named Christophoros, however, invaded the capital of the Paulicians, Tefir, crushed the theocracy and sent Chrysocheir's head to the emperor. Basileios celebrated a solemn triumph on the Hippodrome in 872.

Romanos I Lekapenos' (920-944) rival, Leon Phokas, who was domestikos tōn scholon, colonel of the imperial palace forces, was deserted by his soldiers, imprisoned and had his eyes put out. He had to march dishonoured through the streets of Constantinople. The empress had tried to poison him. Those during Romanos' reign who showed allegiances to the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (913-959), whose guardian Romanos was, were tortured. Romanos' sons tried twice to poison Constantine VII, who had a higher claim to the throne as he was born in the Porphyra, the purple chamber. Adoption and usurpation were the usual means of imperial succession before the Macedonian dynasty made its entrance on the scene, and when the principle of legitimacy, e g strict heredity rights within the imperial family, started to be fairly respected.

When Nicephoros II Phokas (963-969) re-conquered Crete from the Arabs in 960, the inhabitants of Chandax were massacred. The emperor himself, who nine years later placed himself in the palace of

Bukoleon because of the discontent of the people, was murdered there and dismembered in the small hours between the 11 and 12 December 969 by his former faithful friend and lieutenant John I Tzimiskes (969-976) on the order of his empress Theophanu. In fol 157 v a (fig 17), Nicephoros' head is shown to the crowd outside the palace on the point of a lance. This cruel act can be compared to what we know from 13th-century London, where executed prisoners in the Tower were displayed on London Bridge. In front of the ecumenical patriarch Poleuktos (956-970), however, John I Tzimiskes swore before his coronation – the condition for election as emperor – that he had not laid hand on Nicephoros Phokas, and he threw the guilt onto two patricians who were condemned to death and executed. During the stay of John Tzimiskes in Bulgaria Leon Phokas and his son Nicephoros tried in 970 to conquer the palace but were stopped. They sought asylum in the cathedral of Saint Sophia but were violently removed and had their eyes put out.

When Basileios II (976-1025) was emperor Pope John XIV, who ruled during the time of the German emperor Otto II, whose consort was the Byzantine princess Theophanu, niece of Emperor John Tzimiskes, was left starving to death in Constantinople in 985. Basileios, the leader of the Bogomils, a dualistic sect in Thrace and Bulgaria, was burnt alive on the Hippodrome by Alexios I Comnenos (1081-1118) after he had deviously learned all his convictions by inviting him to the palace, honouring him and treacherously pretending to share his opinions.

During the revolt of Andronikos Comnenos, in 1182, protosebastos Contostephanos was arrested and blinded. During this period of anarchy, all the Latin quarters in Constantinople were set on fire, in particular that of the Venetians, and the inhabitants were massacred. At the same time Cardinal John, the legate of Pope Alexander III, was decapitated and his head tied to the tail of a dog. The throats of the sick were cut in their beds – such deeds by the mob caused an irreparable damage to relations between Byzantium and the Italian city republics. Within 20 years Constantinople, with the help of the Venetians, was invaded and plundered by the Frankish Crusaders in 1204 and a Latin interregnum established that lasted until 1261.

When Andronikos I Comnenos made his entrance into Constantinople he first had Mary, who was born in the Porphyra, and her favourite, the Frank Renier de Montferrat, poisoned. The mother of the emperor Mary of Antioch, who was accused of having urged her brother-in-law the Hungarian king to invade the empire, was condemned to death and strangled in prison. In September 1183 Andronikos had pretended to crown Alexios II Comnenos (1180-1183) in Hagia Sophia and was himself crowned co-emperor by the new ecumenical patriarch Basileios II Camateros (1183-1186). Some weeks later the young emperor was strangled in his bed and Andronikos, who now was in his sixties, to everybody's horror took the little fiancée of the victim as his wife, the eleven-year-old princess Anne of France. Andronikos, who had a pronounced criminal character, had been raised by the Sultan in Ikonion and his father had converted to Islam. Andronikos himself was captured on the 12 September 1185 on the Black Sea coast, as he was about to set sail for Krim, and brought back to Constantinople and lynched by an enraged crowd.

Members of the Bogomile sect were persecuted and burnt during the 12th century in Bulgaria. In the struggle between monks and learned men over the doctrine of Hesychasm in the 14th century (which dealt with the eventual possibility of seeing the light of Tabor via asceticism), Gregorius Palamas' unforgiving opponents, who denied the possibility of this phenomenon, were tortured and the body of the polyhistor Nicephoros Gregoras mutilated. In 1341, Admiral Apocaukos threw the innocent mother of his rival John VI Cantacuzenos (1347-1354) into prison where she died.

The principle of Legitimism

In the 9th century the principle of legitimism was implanted in Byzantium in order to rule with some spectacular exceptions. This monarchic cult typical for Byzantium was not practiced with the same force in the West, with the exception of France. The dynastic development of Byzantium is perhaps similar to that of England, with the difference that the imperial institution never completely lost the same revolutionary character that it had from the beginning, when popular and successful military commanders were elevated to the status of emperor by their soldiers in the field. The instability of the order of succession made things easier for usurpers and created disharmony, but favoured competition and quality. At the same time as in the West, in particular in France, it was permitted for the heir to the throne to become king *de facto* and *de iure* at the death of his predecessor, and also even before his formal coronation. From the 12th century on, the legitimate heir to the throne in Byzantium, though he according to the rule was already co-emperor, almost always more or less forced himself onto the throne, either by negotiating with the senate, or the palace guard, or even with the patriarch. The implementation of the hereditary right of succession, which was not codified, did not however remove the risk connected to every ascendancy to the throne of Byzantium, as the power was, in principle, accessible for every general who enjoyed the confidence of ordinary people. Just like the earlier the Macedonian dynasty, the Paleologue, which accounted for ten emperors in around two hundred years, benefited from the new legitimism, which their first emperor had created with violence. This dynasty survived two long civil wars and several usurpations.

One of the most important qualities of the emperor was to guarantee divine right by force of his God-given authority. One of the texts of Leon VI emphasizes this:

Imperial power is a legal authority that has been created to the benefit of all subjects. It does not punish by hatred. It does not reward by favour, but like a match judge gives to each who distinguishes himself the deserved price.

This doctrine of the divine right which gave a human being such power over his subjects also generated revolutions, if it turned out that the one chosen by Providence misused his power. It was in fact the patriarch Nicolaos I Mystikos (901-907, 912-925) – a contemporary of Leon VI, the emperor who in his legal code most clearly expresses the dogma of absolutism – who in a letter to Pope Athanasios III in May 912 formulated the strongest argument against imperial authority:

If the emperor, by diabolic inspiration, issued an order in conflict with divine law nobody needs to obey...If the emperor lets himself be guided by his passions, every subject has the right to revolt.

The emperor also appeared as judge. Michael Beg ordered the strangulation of a tourmarc on Sicily who was accused of having robbed and violated a nun. The penal code at the time of Constantine the Great and his nearest successors was preserved in the codex of Iustinian, the *Corpus iuris civilis*. The death penalty was confined to adultery, murder and the practice of magic. It categorically forbade facial tortures or that free prisoners should be sent to the mines, and tried to restrict the use of crucifixion.

The Penal Law

Only during the early Byzantine time did Christianity assert itself. The Byzantine penal law originates from the transformation of Roman penalties with the influence of Stoic and Neoplatonic humanitarian doctrines. These doctrines already appear in the legislation of the Antonines and the Severians, but in particular they stem from the legislation of Constantine the Great, who was strongly influenced by the Church. The Church had its own canon law, separate from the civil, which suggested penalties intended to give the sinner a possibility to repent. From there originates the right of asylum which was inherited from Greek temples and transmitted by Christian emperors to the church. From this there resulted a tendency to suppress the death penalty in many criminal cases and also to extend the right of asylum permitting criminals to escape from legal sanctions. Finally, the death penalty was replaced, as we have already pointed out, by mutilation that stigmatised the guilty and condemned him to social alienation and misery. Two periods can be discerned in the history of Byzantine penalties:

1. from the 5th to the 7th century the Roman law is transformed in a humanitarian direction.
2. From the 7th century on, this tendency is counteracted by the development of new forms of punishments, corporal punishments and mutilation. During both periods the application of the death penalty was reduced and reserved for high treason, adultery and murder (*in adulterii vel homicidii vel maleficii crimen*).

The right of asylum

The right of asylum was considered sacred – the person fleeing was as a matter of fact the guest of the sanctuary. Iustinian restricted the right of asylum to murderers, adulterers, robbery of females and tax evasion, which shows that consideration to ameliorating circumstances were taken. The right of asylum was preserved for innocent, privately indebted and maltreated slaves.

New penal forms

Leon III's (717-741) *Ekkloga* shows important changes in the administration of punishment, by legislating a system of corporal punishments unknown in the codex of Iustinian, as for example flogging (fig 59), chaining to the log (fig 60) and breaking on the wheel (fig 61). The death penalty could only be administered by sword (fig 1), but was most often replaced by mutilation, the cutting off of the nose, the ears and the tongue, the putting out of the eyes and the cutting off of the hands. This implies a retrogression in relation to the legislation of Constantine the Great, who forbade mutilating the human face which according to him “was created in the image of the celestial beauty”, in other words an image of the prototype. These atrocities were most often executed in the service of political revenge. The cruel punishment of Martina, the widow of Heraclius (610-641), by the senate, who had her tongue cut out and her son Heraclonas, who lost his nose, as they were exiled to Rhodes, and the execution of Iustinian II in 695 who had previously also lost his nose (Theophanes *Chronographia* 341, ed De Boor) are such examples.



Fig 61 Breaking on the wheel, Chludov psalter, fol 44

Mutilation was considered as a way of avoiding the death penalty, which, from the 8th century and on, was only administered for murder, high treason and adultery. It even went so far that mutilation was justified with reference to Ex. 21: 23-25:

**But if disaster happens life shall be given for life,
an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand,
a foot for a foot, a burn for a burn, a wound for a
wound, a bruise for a bruise.**

according to the principle of revenge, without consideration of the psychological results of the punishment. This tendency to a cruel administration of punishments implies a brutalisation and barbarisation of Byzantine society in the 7th century during the Persian war, an effect that remained. Other punishments – tortures to the face or flogging – are signs of the same type of brutality. Even the members of the corporations in Constantinople were punished for simple faults in this way. Also high dignitaries could be flogged. We know of two such cases: one eparch was flogged on the order of Constantine V in 766. Theodoros II Laskaris (1254-1258) had his great logothete Georgios Acropolites publicly flogged after a dispute in 1256. John II Comnenos's reign (1118-1143) is a shining exception. His source quotes:

he did not punish anyone with death or corporal punishment

but he was also married to a saint, the Hungarian princess Eirene.

For lesser faults, internment in a monastery was often stipulated in the official law-courts. For political crimes, exile or confinement in a monastery or fortress was the customary punishment. The beautiful group of islands, the Princes Islands in the Sea of Marmara, are named after the royal prisoners who were regularly exiled upon them.

The emperor's right to pardon often ameliorated the punishment. He could stop executions and extend the right of asylum. Nicephoros III Botaniates (1078-1081) for example established a law that permitted

30 days to pass between the delivering of the judgement of death penalty or mutilation and its execution so as to permit the convicted to take leave of his family. The right to asylum was carefully respected and was strictly supervised by the church, where sin and divine grace were supposed to be in equilibrium. In particular the ecumenical patriarchs Tarasios (784-806), Photios and Nicolaos Mystikos, often intervened in favour of murderers and other offenders. By taking into its protection severe criminals the church wanted to reform them through repentance, and, as far as it was possible, to rehabilitate them morally. From the 9th century on the church consequently tried to replace the civil court with the ecclesiastical. This is shown by a canonical verdict of patriarch Methodios I (843-847) against a murderer who had taken refuge in a church and was sent on to a monastery to make his repentance under the guidance of the higooumenos, the abbot. In the 10th century the church had created a procedure for reintegrating a murderer, who was put under their supervision. After having confessed his crime to each one passing through the main portico of the church over fifteen days, he was brought barefoot and in fetters in front of the defence tribunal and was excommunicated, e.g. denied the Eucharist, which was considered a severe punishment for fifteen years, one year for each day of penance. After having completed the ecclesiastical penance the civil punishment remained – exile and internment in a monastery. This shows very clearly the conservative societal tasks and fundamental importance for aspects of social care exerted by the monasteries.

Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos made certain efforts to restrict the right of asylum for murderers who relapsed into crime, but found resistance from the church. The church never ceased to believe in the possibility that a sinner could be rehabilitated through divine grace. In another paragraph of the law he permits the life of a murderer to be saved if he has fled to an asylum, but that after doing his ecclesiastical penance he must be exiled and his belongings confiscated. Furthermore, his crime will be publicised and he will be unemployable, but he will be given the chance to enter a monastery.

During the reign of Manuel I Comnenos (1143-1180), in 1166 new rules for the right of asylum were stipulated. Murderers often fled after the crime to Hagia Sophia. In many cases they were bribed by dignitaries, who had been involved in a conspiracy, and lived a reclusive life in a monastery to the end of their days. Prohibition from returning to the city where the crime had taken place was gradually overlooked. At this stage those who sought refuge in Hagia Sophia had to undergo a specific ecclesiastical penalty that was decided upon after careful investigation of the case. Malefactors were then exiled to a distant province where they could enter a monastery if the crime had not been premeditated. This legislation remained in force until the end of the empire.

Torture

Another important feature of Byzantine legislation was the practice of torture, *zētesis*, as a means of testing conspirators. This was a legacy from the Roman legal procedure and included such punishments as whipping, the rack, the wheel and the vice (tormentum). The Iustinian law refers to all imperial stipulations from the time of Septimius Severus' law of 197 A D, that reserved torture for slaves and forbids it to be used in relation to an accusation against a slave-owner (except in the case of adultery, tax crimes and lèse majesté). The Iustinian law codex *Corpus iuris civilis* confirmed the earlier laws that permitted the torture of inherited slaves even if they had not committed any offences in hereditary disputes, also when they were given free in a testament. In this way the right to property is prohibited irrespective of social class.

The so-called *honestiores*, men who were versed in law and investigated legal disputes and later those who had the rank of a senator, could not be exposed to torture. In Leon's *Ekloga*, torture was reserved for slaves and in cases of lèse majesté torture could be used on anyone, including witnesses who were more than 14 years old. During the last centuries of the empire verdicts were introduced into the legislation in court through duels or ordeal, customs borrowed from the West through the Crusaders, and from surrounding barbarian states, in particular during the time of John III Doucas Vatatzes (1222-1254) during the Latin empire.

The prisons were primitive places for accommodating those accused and waiting for their trials. Among others, these are described by Saxo Grammaticus when relating Harald Hardrade's fate in Constantinople. In most cases the monasteries served as real prisons where the convicted were confined. During certain periods, for example during the Comnenes, prisons in a more modern sense were founded for political prisoners in the provinces. A few inscriptions on Egyptian papyrus scrolls verify the existence of a prison in each city in the 6th century. These were at the disposal of the civil governor, who had the right to announce orders of arrest and could use the laws as a means to interfere in the life of the citizens. Also on the large private estates, for instance the breeding-stud at Apion, there were private, smaller prisons, where both criminals and thieves were confined. By means of imperial edicts these smaller prisons could also undertake offender rehabilitation.

In the capital itself prisons were avoided; they were potentially dangerous during revolts. Those who had been convicted for crimes served their time in exile in the provinces. The pretorium, where the eparch resided, was main prison and was presided over by a logothete. There the accused waited for the verdict after interrogation. The emperor often came there himself to examine the prisoners. The executions that were carried out were comparatively few, but in principle took place at the Kynegon, a place in the Second District of the town, at the slope of the acropolis to the north of St George monastery, in the Mangana Quarter. At the great Palace there was a prison called Noumera, housed in the old barracks of the guard, founded by Constantine the Great and converted into a place of arrest during Heraclius' time; the troop of guards known as Noumera was still housed there. Later, when the Comnenes established themselves in the Blachernae, a part of the Great Palace served as the main prison. In the Great Palace there was also another smaller prison called the Elephantine (where Alexios I Comnenos locked up the Bogomils) that was presumably close to the Ivory Gate. Furthermore, a prison was situated in the Bukoleon Palace in the 9th century. During the civil war in 1345 the Megadux, the cunning Great Admiral Alexis Apocaukos, arrested all relatives and friends of his rival John VI Cantacuzenos and in the Mangana Quarter, near the place of execution, constructed a prison with narrow cells where he could handily confine his political victims. One day when he inspected the prison he was suddenly surrounded by prisoners and was killed by his political adversaries. Finally, Anemas' defence tower at the town wall exceptionally served as a kind of Bastille and where, when necessary, political prisoners were shut up waiting for trial during the Comnenes. It was built by Manuel I Comnenos for this purpose only, not far from the Golden Horn, between the Tower of Isaac Angelos and the Blachernae Gate.

The constant fear of revolts explains the strictness in the penal code of the army that concerned the whole hierarchy of rank. It was practised, for example, on Leon V the Armenian's strategos for the thema Armeniakion, who was flogged and driven into exile for having bought himself free by letting the enemy

have access to war funds. According to Leon VI's *Taktika*, the death penalty was administered through decapitation of the conspirators in a plot against a general strategos, and to others who had shown sympathy with the plot and had left their posts and tried to pass over to the enemy. Different sorts of corporal punishments or fines were used as punishment for other faults, for instance fights between soldiers and neglect of weapons.

In certain circumstances, soldiers who took flight were separated and the ringleaders whipped in sight of the others. At regular intervals these penalties were read out in front of the troops. Misuse of the powers of command was punished harder depending on the rank. Every soldier who had been offended could complain to a superior. The chronicles reflect how rigorously these regulations were practised, in particular by Nicephoros II Phokas, who never compromised on matters of army discipline.

Another important sanction was the moral stain that was attached to serious offences. The military sense of honour was highly developed in the Byzantine army. Any soldiers who gave themselves over to the enemy without acceptable reason brought shame upon themselves, and the command was immediately punished by degradation. The military penal code seems to have been practised very severely, in particular in the training camp of Manuel I Comnenos (1143-1180) in terms of deserters. A certain Neophytos, who later became an aesthete and founded the monastery New Sion on Cyprus, was arrested in Paphos as a deserter and was condemned to be scourged, blinded and his nose cut off. The officers themselves were no more lenient and offending soldiers were put into prison and had to parade in the streets in women's clothes, riding backwards on donkeys taunted by the mob.

The *Ekloga* contains a whole system of corporal punishments unknown in Iustinian's code: amputations of the nose, tongue and hands, blinding, head shaving or actually burning the hair. Without doubt these terrible corporal penalties in certain cases spared the death penalty; they also replaced the fines which were enumerated in the Iustinian law. The predilection for mutilation implies a drastic perversion of the Roman legal concept that was founded on the fundamental tenet that any crime should be expiated with punishment and restraint, and that, after having served his time, the criminal should be rehabilitated.

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War and Diplomacy

During the period covered by the Skylitzes chronography Byzantium reached its peak as a warfaring nation. It is the heroic time of Nicephoros II Phokas, John I Tzimiskes and Basileios II, brilliant generals who extend the borders of the empire in East, South and West in contests with the Arabs, the Petchenegs, the Cumans, the Slavs and the Bulgarians. It is the beginning of the defeat of the Arabs in eastern Mediterranean where both Cyprus and Crete as well as a part of Sicily was regained. At the same time a process of drastic increase of the property of the landlords leads to the impoverishment of the main part of the peasants and finally they are changed from independent small-holders to dependent serfs, *paroikoi*. When independent peasants disappear as a social class also the basis for the recruitment of soldiers vanishes and the army must be composed of mercenaries. In 988 a contingent of 6 000 Rus' soldiers rescued Basileios II's reign. A part of them were Scandinavians, who from then on served as the Varangian palace guard of the emperor and as regular soldiers in the army. Later on from about 1070 the Varangians were recruited from England.

The year 1025 however is crucial. At the death of Basileios II starts immediately the decline of the empire. The following emperors were civil aristocrats who ruled without principle and firmness in the administrative and economic sphere.

In her exciting reports of war in the *Alexiade*, this inexhaustible source of knowledge of the war tactics, reflecting the battles between Byzantium and the barbarians, including the Crusaders, Anne Comnene (op cit X,V, 10) informs us that the Normands during the campaign against the Greeks shall have mutilated infants, pierced them on piles and roasted them over fire, a crime that also the Arabs accuse the Crusaders for having committed. This cruel deed is depicted in a sequence of images in the Sacra Parallela, Par. Graec. 923, fol 227 r, Bibliothèque nationale, from the 10th century (fig 62) illuminating an episode told in Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*, occurring during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A D. A woman by name of Mary, daughter of Eleazar, was driven to exasperation during the famine and committed the abomination of slaying her own child, roasting it over fire and eating half of it herself and offering the rest to the terrified soldiers who refused and departed trembling.

An explanation to this horrible custom, probably based on extremely old rituals of fertility magic and efforts to protect from the evil eye, is reflected in an event related by Anne Comnene that should have taken place in Pergamon in 717 during the Arabic siege. The inhabitants hurried on the deliverance of a young woman, who was giving birth to her first-born and sacrificed him by putting him into a boiling-pot, where every soldier wet his hand before he met the enemy, who in spite of this ritual conquered the city and massacred its inhabitants.

It is difficult to find Arabic and Persian illuminated manuscripts from this time. But from the pictures we can infer that the war was a ritual affair, a feast and an exhibition of martial virtues and imperial hierarchy. The assembled order of the troupes and the war trumpets are pointed out and all the standards that flap in the wind. Here violence is a prerequisite for the formation of the state, for the maintenance of the ranger's district and for the defence of the territory. The defensive violence is still a condition of peaceful coexistence.

In the images reflecting war tactics, a science mastered by the Byzantines, we are confronted with sieges, battles and triumphs. Two types of battle scenes develop, one reflecting the Persian or Arabic style, seen on fol 19 r (fig 63), where the Byzantines are fighting the Bulgarian chieftain Krum, who was a very dangerous enemy to the empire. On fol 35 v a (fig 64) the picture is to be read from right to left, where khan Omurtag is said to be killing Thomas the Slavonian in the legend (who in reality was executed by the Byzantines). On fol 54 v (fig 65) is pictured an expedition by emperor Theophilos against the Arabs. Another type of battle scene is based on the Hellenistic tradition similar to the celebrated late antique mosaic of the battle of Issos 333 B C between the Persian shah-en-shah Dareios and Alexander the Great, seen on fol 109 r b (fig 66). On fol 214 r (fig 67) the Sicilian town Messina is besieged by the Arabs, whose camp is covering the right part of the picture. And on fol 217 r b (fig 68) another city, that of

Thessaloniki, is attacked by the Bulgarians and liberated. Another siege of a town, that of Mopsuestia during the campaign of Nicephoros Phokas in Sicily shows the famous catapult on fol 151 b (fig 69).

Fig 62 A woman roasting her baby, The Sacra Parallela, Par. Graec. 923, fol 227 r, 9th century, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris



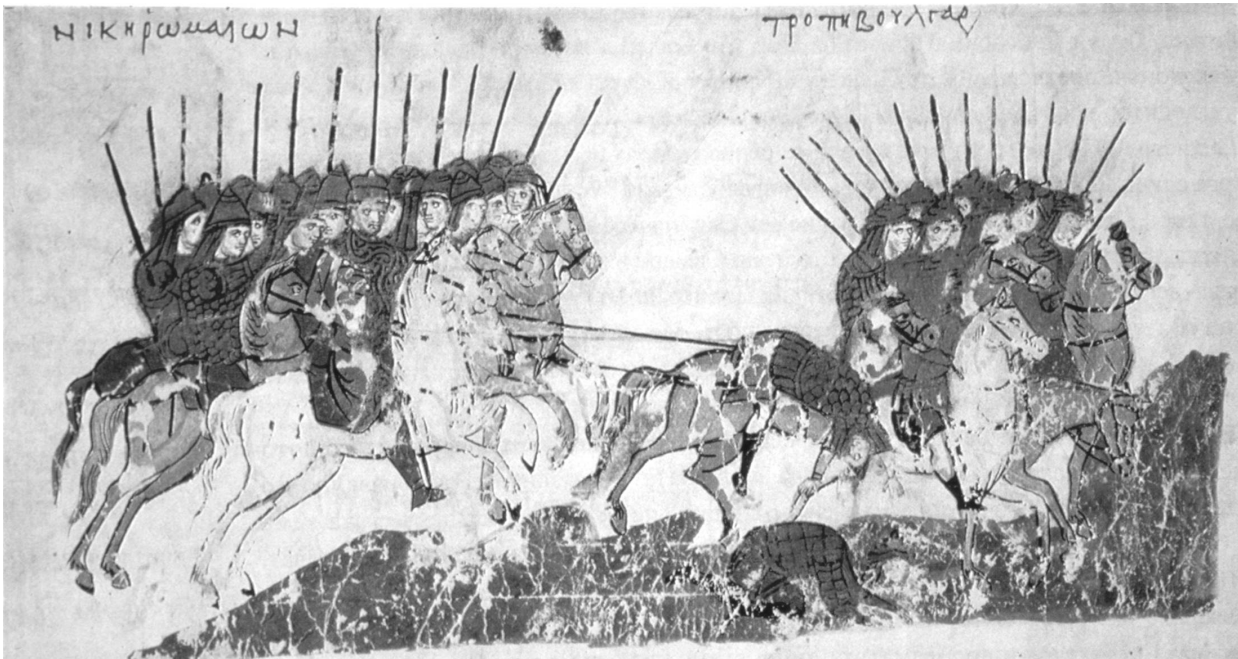


Fig 63 A battle scene in Persian or Arabic style, fol 19 r



Fig 64 A battle scene read from right to left, Khan Omurtag killing Thomas the Slavonian, fol 35 v a



Fig 65 Theophilos' expedition against the Arabs, fol 54 v



Fig 66 Bulgarians in battle with Byzantines, fol 109 r b

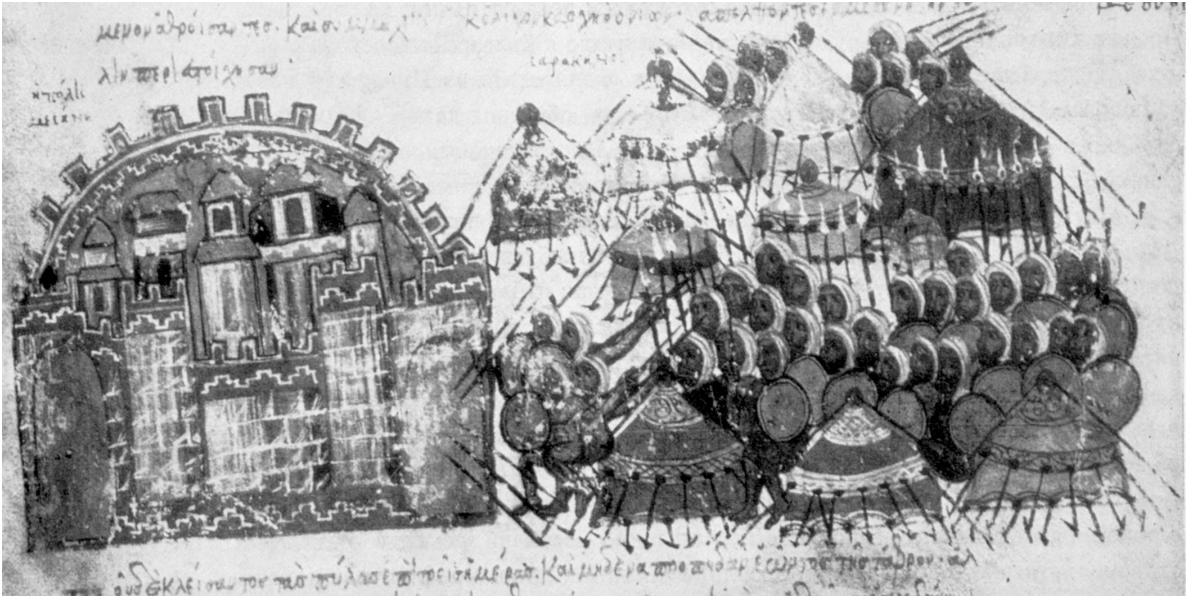


Fig 67 Messina besieged by the Arabs, fol 214 r



Fig 68 The liberation of Thessaloniki, fol 217 r b



Fig 69 The siege of Mopsuestia during Nicephoros Phokas' campaign in Sicily with catapults, fol 151 b

War was considered as an evil but it was also seen as a necessary means to defend the Christian empire. Courage, prowess in arms and good generalship were praised in such successful military commands as Herakleios and Basileios II. On the other hand emperors who avoided unnecessary bloodshed were also praised and diplomacy was recommended to resolve conflicts, especially by the churchmen who influenced by the teachings of the New Testament and of the church fathers, especially St Basileios the Great, opposed to military actions and refused to sanction killing. Nicephoros II Phokas who considered his war against the Arabs holy and his soldiers who fell in the battles as martyrs, was opposed by patriarch Polyuktos who referred to St Basileios' rule that soldiers who had killed in battle were refused the Holy Eucharist for three years. The concept of Holy War as practiced by the Muslims and the Crusaders was alien to the Byzantines, only once was a plenary remission of sins granted to the Byzantine army.

Diplomacy was one of the main activities of an educated and versatile bureaucray in Byzantium. The concept of the uniqueness and supremacy of the Byzantine empire was inherited from Rome. Imperial power was conceived as the result of God's choice. The emperor was the supreme chief of all the administration of the empire, the chief command of the army, the sovereign judge and sole legislator, the defender of the church and the guardian of the Orthodox faith. He decided over peace and war, his decisions were irrevocable and his enactments had the value of divine inspiration. All the world should therefore be united under one Roman Christian emperor, who according to the imperial ideology was always perceived as a peace-maker (*eirenoποιος*). Other rulers were arranged in a big family of princes in relation to the Byzantine emperor who was the "father". In diplomatic texts the designations "son", "brother", "cousin" etc were used to design vassality and degree of familiarity.

Thus a hierarchy of states was constructed around the Byzantine empire on the basis of power, religion and level of civilization. The Sassanian Persians came closest to the Byzantine emperor, then the Arabs with whom negotiations were conducted on almost equal terms. The western European states, separated from the Byzantine empire from the 5th century on, were given mediocre ranks. The weight of the gold seal attached to the official letters of correspondance manifested this hierarchic distance to the Byzantine emperor. Thus in the 10th century *bonllae* of four solidi were sent to the Arab caliph, of three solidi to the khan of the Khazars, of two solidi to the prince of Rus', of one solidus or two to the Pope of Rome and the king of France. The title "emperor of the Romans", *basileus tôn Romaiôn*, was reserved for the Byzantine emperor and the imperial title *basileus* was unwillingly recognized for princes governing restricted territories of the Franks, the Germans, the Bulgarians or the Serbs.

On fol 114 v a (fig 70) we see Arab diplomats brought into Hagia Sophia where priests and deacons bring forth from the sanctuary precious chalices and patens studded with pearls and precious stones. This demonstration of the church treasures happens on the occasion of emperor Leon VI:s treaty with the Arabs. It also happened that distinguished Arab prisoners were allowed to take part in the procession of the Great Entrance, when the holy gifts were brought from the prothesis to the main altar, in the official liturgies.



Fig 70 Arabic diplomats in the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia, fol 114 v a

Bulgaria was a source of constant trouble for Byzantium. On fol 18 v a (fig 71) Khan Krum (803-814), its principal enemy, is seated in a tent receiving diplomats from Leon V the Armenian. Only a heart attack could prevent him from finally threatening the imperial capital. On fol 35 r (fig 72) his son Khan Omurtag (814-831) who was friendly in his attitude towards Byzantium is receiving diplomats from emperor Michael III. Later on on fol 67 v b (fig 73) the Christian king Boris I (852-889) of Bulgaria sends diplomats to empress Theodora and Michael III with a yellow and a blue horse with a beautiful blue plume. Also Africa was the object of diplomacy. On fol 148 v a b (fig 74) Romanos II receives Arab diplomats from the Egyptian king Fatlum. On fol 109 r a (fig 75) diplomats from another Bulgarian head of state, tsar Symeon (893-927), arrive at Leon VI the Philosopher. On fol 200 (fig 76) emperor Romanos III Argyros is receiving an embassy from the queen of Abchasia, at that time a country on the borders of Georgia.

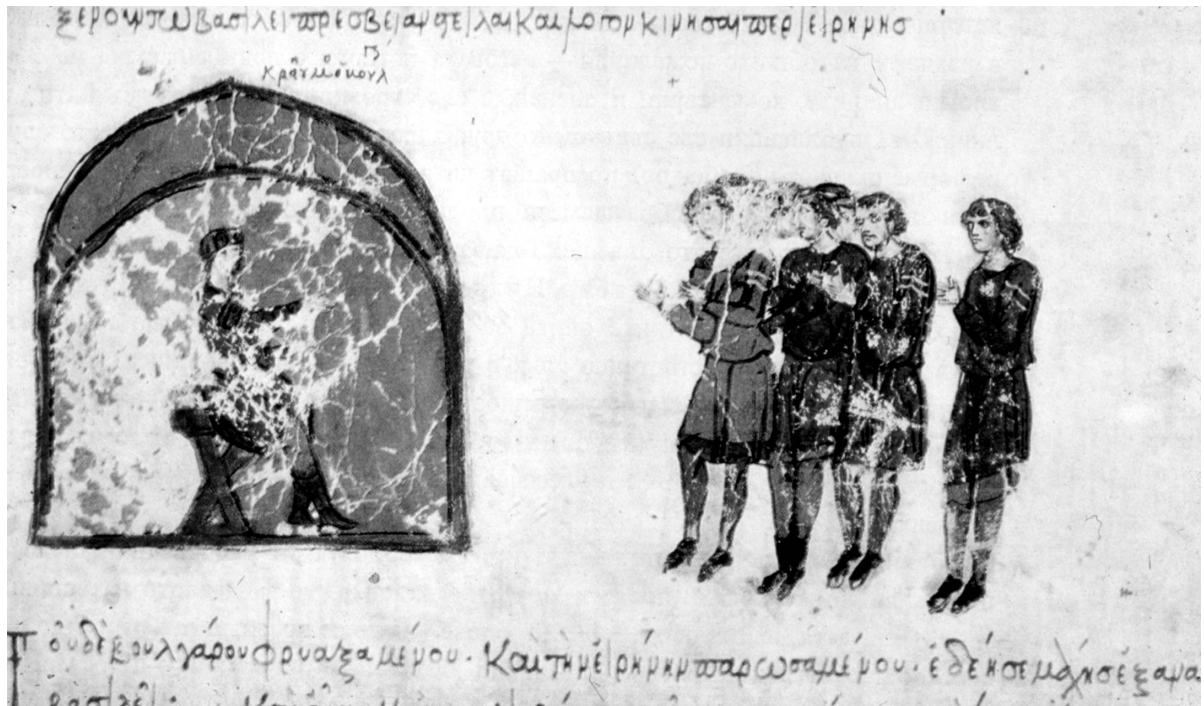


Fig 71 Khan Krum receives diplomats from Leon V, fol 18 v a



Fig 72 Khan Omurtag receives diplomats from Michael III, fol 35 r



Fig 73 Boris I of Bulgaria sends diplomats to empress Theodora and Michael III, fol 67 v b



Fig 74 Romanos II receives diplomats from the Egyptian king Fatlum, fol 148 v a b



Fig 75 Diplomats from tsar Symeon arrive to Leon VI, 109 r a

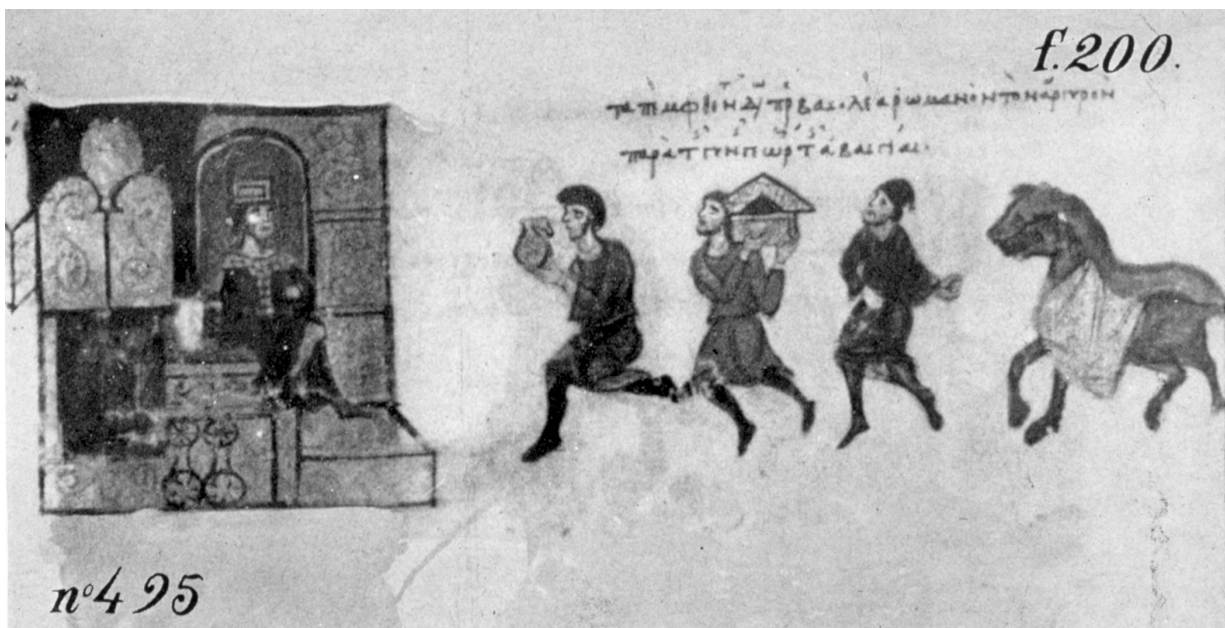


Fig 76 Romanos III Argyros receives an embassy from the queen of Abchazia, fol 200



Fig 77 Grand princess of Kiev Olga baptized in Constantinople in 957, fol 135 b

Another side of the diplomatic activity was the invitation of foreign rulers to come and stay in Constantinople. Thus the Russian widow of Grand prince Igor, Olga, who had besieged the Khazars, stayed in Constantinople during the autumn in 957. She was baptized and the emperor became her godfather and she adopted the name of the empress as a neophyte, Helen, seen on fol 135 b (fig 77). She then returned to Kiev overloaded with presents, silk and gold. On the frescoes in the staircase to the southern tower in the Kiev cathedral we see her together with her retinue in baptismal dress, white costume without crown or nimbus in the Hippodrome, where the emperor presides in the imperial loge, the Cathisma, during the horse races that were given in her honour.

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Hagia Sophia and Ottoman Architecture – prototype and antitype

Hagia Sophia, the principal monument of Christian architecture of Justinian times, is fundamental to the history of architecture. A paradigm of the Christian temple, materializing in its structure central ideas since Plato of the essence of Cosmos and its tendency to form perfect geometrical spaces.

Neo-Babylonian and Jewish liturgical and iconographical traditions have contributed to its complex structure. In the topography of Constantinople it is placed as a strategic symbol of the centre of the world, the *omphalos*, with cosmic symbolism in plenty. Mogens Krstrup has demonstrated in two articles in the Danish Arkitektur that this concept of a world centre, a fixed point in cosmos, is expressed both in its gigantic plan and elevation. Ancient architectural traditions culminate in Saint Sophia in her double narthices and atrium-shaped forecourt. Every window, stone, pillar and marble slab carries symbolic associations interpreted by a number of scholars. We mention Krautheimer, Whittemore, Mango and Cormack. Josef Strzygowski ¹ has underlined its oriental conception of space which he traces in Armenia and Iran. He writes:

Sie ist im Baugedanken rein armenisch, indem sie eine einzige Kuppel durch Halbkuppeln, an das Mittelquadrat angelehnt, verstrebt. Zwar sind die Strebenischen im Norden und Süden ersetzt durch Gewölbe zwischen mächtigen Strebepfeilern, welche es ermöglichen, die Forderung nach Emporen zu erfüllen; aber schon die Baumeister der türkischen Eroberer haben den ursprünglichen Baugedanken erkannt und bei Nachahmung der Sophienkirche in ihren Riesenmoscheen den reinen Vierpass der Armenier wiederhergestellt.

Wie die Sophienkirche vor uns steht, ist sie das Ergebnis von Forderungen der Kirche nach einem Durchschlagen der Längsrichtung trotz der einen Kuppel, sie entspricht zugleich durch Einfügung der Empore in die armenische Grundart den Bedürfnissen der griechischen Kirche und des Hofes nach einer Reichsversammlungshalle. Neben der armenischen Grundform wirkt zum überwältigenden Gesamteindruck eine aus iranischer Verkleidungs- und griechischer wachsender Architektur genommene Vereinigung der ausstattenden Glieder durchschlagend mit.

When nine hundred years later the Ottoman Empire was founded by Mehmet the Conqueror, there was a profoundly felt awareness of the importance of this monument expressed in different remaining documents. Mehmet's idea was to substitute the Christian for the Islamic, two religions with evident points of interconnections, at least in the common Jewish ancestry. An immense project of deconstruction and reconstruction was launched. But historical irony led the victors to be influenced by the strong Byzantine tradition. In order to find skilful architects they had to resort to the Greek tradition and in Kayseri, the Greek Caesarea in Anatolia, was found a genius, the architect Sinan of unknown Greek parentage. He made a hitherto unseen synthesis of Byzantine and Islamic tradition. His magnificent counterpart of Saint Sophia – the Suleymaniye – speaks an Islamic idiom with a pronounced Greek accent.

¹ Josef Strzygowski, *Ursprung der christlichen Kirchenkunst*, 1920. 39-40.

In order to estimate the real influence of Hagia Sophia on the Ottoman mosque architecture of Istanbul and Edirne throughout the relevant centuries we have to compare systematically the plans, structures and details from the following aspects, which is the task of a bigger project than can be reported here:

1. Disposition of the spaces, the inner and the outer.
2. Details of pillars and columns. The use of Byzantine spoils.
3. Proportions carried out throughout the complex.
4. Axiality.
5. Dialectics of the inner space – higher versus lower, broader versus narrower.
6. The system of domes and half-domes. The system of dome support. We concentrate on the pendentive systems.
7. Window systems in the dome and on the clerestory walls and the distribution of light in the building body.
8. The number of windows on the central dome and its symbolic implication.
9. The material of construction.
10. The Anatolian and Seldjuk tradition as a prelude to the imperial mosque, the *ulucami*.
11. The tradition of Cairo and Cordova.
12. The synthesis of the Byzantine and Islamic complex – the intra-city complex of the metropolis in a worldwide empire with educational, liturgical, commercial and hospitality functions.

An interest will be taken in the role of Saint Sophia as prototype and antitype of the Ottoman mosque. The Islamic religious reluctance to pictures and human icons resulted in an iconoclastic treatment of Saint Sophia. As a replacement for the rich Christian anthropomorphic decorative programme another type of ornaments with repetitive effects elevating the spirit by visual symbolism to the sphere of paradisiacal beauty was practiced. The eight spheres of heaven were concentrated to the Christian conception of heaven approaching the earth by means of a floating cupola lit up by a series of windows making the light pass through in a volume-consuming fashion. The Moslem temple cannot entirely be dissociated from its desert connotations. The original prayer house was a desert tent with paradisiacal symbolism associating an oasis with plants, animals and life-giving water.

The literary sources of Saint Sophia and of the Ottoman imperial mosques offer important information. A detailed photographing of Saint Sophia and the following mosques *in situ* will demonstrate our propositions mentioned above: the imperial mosque Selimiye in Edirne, the destroyed and rebuilt Fatih in Istanbul, the Bayezid, the Schzade, the Suleymaniye and the Sultan Ahmed in Istanbul.

I

As a point of departure we will analyse two centrally planned architectural monuments in the capital of the early Byzantine and the early Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, called the Queen of Cities.

Hagia Sophia – summing up in her ideal scheme the whole mathematical geometrical perfection of the Greco-Roman architectural tradition in her closed verticality – and the Suleymaniye Mosque – a reinterpreted quotation of the structure of Saint Sophia in another idiom, also breaking away from tradition – were constructed within an interval of a thousand years when the two empires enjoyed their zeniths, during the golden era of Iustinian and the Ottoman classicism. The former building serves as a prototype and antitype of the latter (figs 1, 2).

Hagia Sophia has always been considered as the perfect temple – cosmos as image – an *acheiropoietos* not constructed by human hands. It is indeed interesting to notice that the Islamic literary sources pay homage to this same building as the perfect mosque – the domed basilica, transformed into a domed mosque.



Fig 1 The cathedral of Hagia Sophia 527-535

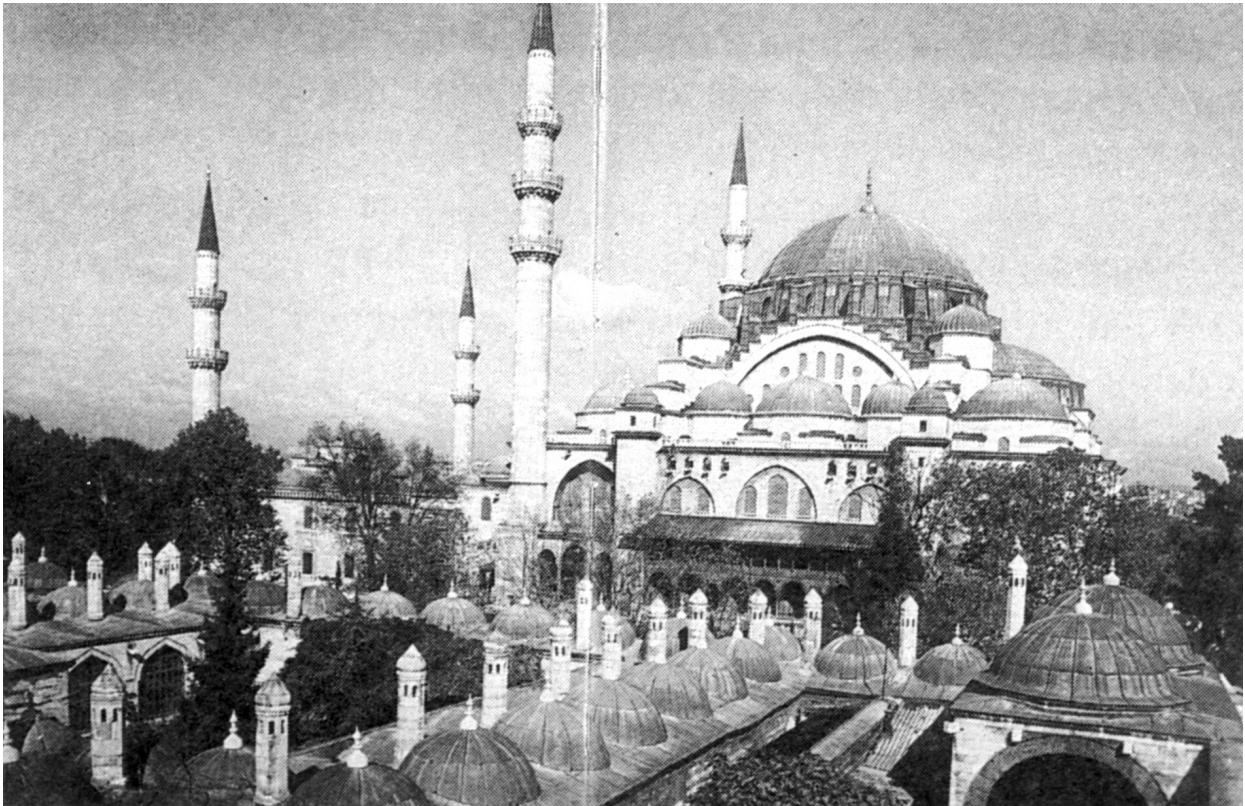


Fig 2 The Süleymaniye Mosque 1550-1557

Already the emissaries sent by Prince Vladimir of Kiev in the late 10th century returned to his court with the confession: We did not know whether we were in heaven or on earth!

The inner spaces of Saint Sophia, articulated and denied in a constantly ongoing process, recapitulate in the huge dome the principal elements of the universe as they appeared to the mentality of the Middle Ages. The Cosmos was considered a closed sphere and everything in this sphere was arranged into an hierarchical order. Space could be shaped in order to adequately serve the Byzantine imperial and ecclesiastical hierarchy. The central nave was reserved for the liturgy and the lateral aisles were for the congregation.

In an analogous way Suleymaniye's imposing composition has been interpreted as an hierarchically closed system, reflecting the Ottoman hierarchy with the sultan-caliph at the summit. But in spite of this the interior reflects a somewhat more democratic tendency for ceremonial reasons.

Already in the 10th century the Arab geographer Ishaq-al-Husain² described the city of Constantinople:

**It is an enormous and important city, which does not have its equal...
There are big churches and mosques for the Muslims. The Romans
(i e the Byzantines) treat their Moslem prisoners with magnanimity
and care for their well-being. In Constantinople there are talismans
(i e miracle-working statues) and wonderful monuments from antiquity.**

According to Paul the Silentiary³, emperor Iustinian exclaimed on the 27 December 537 when Saint Sophia was consecrated:

**Glory to God, who found me worthy to accomplish this
edifice – Solomon I have vanquished thee!**

The Ottoman chronicler Evliya Chelebi⁴ of the 17th century puts the following words into the mouth of architect Sinan to Suleyman the Magnificent, when the mosque was completed in 1557:

**I have built for thee, O Emperor, a mosque which will
remain on the face of the earth till the day of judgment,
and when Hallaj Mansur comes, and rends Mount Demavand
from its foundation, he will play tennis with it and the cupola
of the mosque.**

At the beginning of the 16th century the caliphate was transferred from Cairo to Constantinople. Thus both the spiritual and the secular power was again concentrated there. In the capital of Iustinian the patriarch had just started to use the title "ecumenical patriarch" in order to emphasize his worldwide

² Ishaq-al-Husain, in Bernard Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire*, Oklahoma 1972, 96.

³ Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453*, Sources and Documents, New York 1972, Paul the Silentiary, Description of Saint Sophia, 80-91.

⁴ Evliya Chelibi, *Seyâtnamesi*, Istanbul 1928, in Lewis, *op cit* 110, idem: *Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa*, transl J von Hammer, London 1834, idem: *Im Reiche des goldenen Apfels*, transl R F Kreutel, Graz 1857. Architectural studies see Paul A Underwood, Ernest J W Hawkins, *The Mosaics of Hagia Sophia at Istanbul*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (DOP) 15, 1961, 187-220, Cyril Mango, Ernest J W Hawkins, *The Apse Mosaic of Saint Sophia*, DOP 19, 1965, 113-152, Rowland J Mainstone, *The Reconstruction of the Tympana of St Sophia at Istanbul*, DOP 24, 1969, 353-363, Cyril Mango, Ernest J W Hawkins, *The Mosaics of Saint Sophia at Istanbul*, DOP 26, 1972, 1-42, George Majeska, *St Sophia in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, DOP 27, 1973, 69-88, idem: *Notes on the Archaeology of St Sophia at Constantinople*, DOP 32, 1978, 299-308, Robin Cormack, Ernest J W Hawkins, *The Mosaics of St Sophia at Istanbul*, DOP 31, 1977, 175-252, Cyril Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St Sophia at Istanbul*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 10, 1962, Alfons Maria Schreiner, *Die Hagia Sophia zu Konstantinopel*, 1939, Heinz Kähler, *Die Hagia Sophia*, Berlin 1967, Godfrey Goodwin, *A History of Ottoman Architecture*, Thames 1971, Aptulla Kuran, *The Mosque in Early Ottoman Architecture*, Chicago 1968, Speros Vryonis Jr, *The Byzantine Legacy and Ottoman Forms*, DOP 24, 1969, 251-308, M A Charles, *Hagia Sophia and the Great Imperial Mosques*, *The Art Bulletin* XII:4, 1930, 321-347, H S Nyberg, *Bysans och Islam*, in S Tunberg S E Bring, *Världshistoria* VI, 1929, 531-644.

jurisdictional claims. Suleyman the Magnificent did not only call himself Sultan over the Arabs, Iranians and Rum, but *Padidshah-i-Islam*, the Emperor of Islam.

The geographical extension of the empires in the 10th and 12th centuries makes it evident that the sultanate of Iconium (Rum) had overtaken the Byzantine lead. When Adrianople fell in 1361 and the Ottomans gained hold on the Balkans, Constantinople was caught in a pair of tongs and its fate practically sealed.

The climax of this drama was reached on the 31 May 1453 when Mehmet II Fatih, the Conqueror, made his entrance into the conquered city of Constantinople. In striking contrast to the plaintive reports of the horrors of the conquest, when the city was emptied of its living residents, this event is mirrored by the Ottoman historian Tursun Beg⁵ who at the end of the 15th century wrote a biography of Sultan Mehmet, seen on the famous portrait by Bellini from 1480 (fig 3):

**These are the gardens of Eden
enter them endowed with eternal life –
if You seek Paradise, oh you Sufi
the topmost heaven is Aya Sofya**

Tursun Beg continues:

Mehmet wanted to see Aya Sofya, a sign from Paradise

Some of the subordinate buildings of the complex had fallen in ruin, but the great dome still stood:

**What a dome, that vies in rank with the nine spheres
of heaven! *In this work a perfect master has displayed
the whole of the architectural science.* With half-domes
one upon the other, with angles both acute and obtuse,
with peerless vaults, like the arched brows of heart-ravishing
girls, with stalactite adornments, he made the interior so vast,
that it can hold 50,000 (here he evidently hints at the ornaments
of the open-work capitals and arcades)...**The emperor of the World,
having looked upon the strange and wondrous images and
adornments that were on the concave inner surface, deigned
to climb up to the convex outer surface, mounting as the
Spirit of God ascended to the fourth sphere of
heaven. Looking down as he passed from the battlements
at each level, on to the marble court below, he went up to
the dome. When he saw the dependent buildings of this mighty
structure fallen in ruin, he thought of the impermanence and
instability of this world, and of its ultimate destruction.****

He ordered the Friday prayer to be read and from that day Hagia Sophia was a mosque.

In the description of the change at the Ottoman conquest by the historian Sa'd-ed-din⁶, the conception of Saint Sophia as an antitype appears more clearly:

**That wide region, that strong and lofty city...from being
the nest of the owl of error, was turned into the capital of
glory and honour. Through the noble efforts of the
Muhammedan sultan, for the evil-voiced clash of the**

⁵ Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, ed Halil Inalcik, Rhoads Murphey, Minneapolis 1978.

⁶ Sa'd-ed-din, *The Capture of Constantinople*, transl E J W Gibb, London 1893, in B Lewis, *Istanbul*, 9.



Fig 3 Mehmet II Fatih, the Conqueror, 1430-1481, painting by Gentile Bellini

bells of the shameless misbelievers was substituted the Muslim call to prayer, the sweet five-times repeated chant of the Faith of the glorious rites, and the ears of the people of the Holy War were filled with the melody of the call to prayer. The churches which were within the city were emptied of their vile idols, and cleansed from their filthy and idolatrous impurities (i.e. the portraits and icons fig 4,5); and by the defacement of their images, and the erection of the Islamic prayer niches and pulpits, many monasteries and chapels became the envy of the Gardens of Paradise. The temples of the misbelievers were turned into the mosques of the pious, and the rays of the light of Islam drove away the hosts of darkness from that place so long the abode of the despicable infidels, and the streaks of the dawn of the Faith dispelled the lurid blackness of oppression, for the word, irresistible as destiny, of the fortunate sultan became supreme in the governance of this new dominion...

In the 6th century Procopius⁷ describes the cathedral of Saint Sophia in dialectical terms. The building is a part of the city and at the same time an independent unit, unusually long and unusually wide, voluminous but proportionate. The light seems to flow from outside but at the same time be generated from within. The structure is solid but gives a feeling of insecurity. The volumes perform a rhythmical choral dance. The pillars appear like naked mountaintops. The vaults seem to float and the dome to be suspended to a golden chain in heaven. The perspectives are shifting, yet the unities of space follow each other in a clear sequence.

Nabi,⁸ an Ottoman poet of the 17th century calls Hagia Sophia:

**The wonder of the ages
its dome the eighth of the heavenly spheres
we have not seen its peer in any land
it has none, save perhaps in Paradise**

A Syrian hymn⁹ from the 7th century explains the symbolic content of the domed basilica based on the teachings of Pseudo-Dionysios, who identified the church building with the cosmos:

**The vaults are expanding like the heavens and shine
like mosaics as the stars on the firmament. Its high
flying dome is the Heaven of heavens where God dwells,
the four arches the four cardinal points of the world
in the colours of the rainbow, the pillars, the mountain
ranges of the world. The marble walls shine like the light
of an uncreated god, the three windows of the apsis symbolize
the Trinity. The nine steps leading to the sanctuary the
nine choirs of angels. The building represents heaven and
earth with apostles, martyrs, prophets and God himself.**

The forty windows that as it seems from below are lifting up the immense central dome point to the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia, who in the early Christian times served a prophylactic symbolic function and were placed high up in the nave as protecting saints, as is the case in Garda church on Gotland. The immaterial

⁷ Procopius Caesariensis, *De aedificiis*, I, 23 sq, ed Loeb, 72-78.

⁸ Nabi'nin, *Surnâmesi*, Istanbul 1944, in Lewis, *op cit*, 98.

⁹ Cyril Mango, John Parker, *A twelfth century description of St Sophia*, DOP 14, 1960, 233-246, Cyril Mango, *Architettura bizantina*, Venice 1974, 107-123.



Fig 4 Mosaic on the wall of the south gallery of Hagia Sophia, John II Comnenos (1118-1143), published with the courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, Washington D C



Fig 5 Mosaic on the wall of the south gallery, Christ, central figure of a Deesis, 12th or 13th century

uncreated light that was hinted to is described in a treaty by Dionysios Areopagites¹⁰ on the celestial hierarchies.

The first dome was coated in plain gold mosaic and the second dome mosaic bore the outlines of a huge cross. Below the mosaic canopy the walls were sheeted with carefully chosen and matched sheets of marble, porphyry and other stones. Paul the Silentiary¹¹ writes in his panegyric on Saint Sophia:

**Yet who, even in the thundering strains of Homer,
shall sing the marble meadows gathered upon the
mighty walls and spreading pavement of the lofty
church? Mining /tools of/ toothed steel have cut
these from the green flanks of Carystus and have
cleft the speckled Phrygian stone, sometimes rosy
mixed with white, sometimes gleaming with purple
and silver flowers. There is a wealth of porphyry
stone, too, besprinkled with little bright stars that
had laden the river-boat on the broad Nile. You
may see the bright green stone of Laconia and
the glittering marble with wavy veins found in the
deep gullies of the Iasian peaks, exhibiting slanting
streaks of blood-red and livid white; the pale yellow
with swirling red from the Lydian headland; the
glittering crocus-like golden stone which the Lybian
sun, warning it with its golden light, has produced
on the steep flanks of the Morrish hills; that of
glittering black upon which the Celtic crags, deep
in ice, have poured here and there an abundance
of milk; the pale onyx with glint of precious metal;
and that which the land of Atrax yields, not from
some upland glen, but from the level plain: in parts
vivid green not unlike emerald, in others of a darker
green, almost blue. It has spots resembling snow
next to flashes of black so that in one stone various
beauties mingle.**

The question whether the cathedral of Saint Sophia, the denomination of which has in view the Divine Wisdom, *sophia*, one of God's creative energies, or in this case the second Person of the Trinity, Christ, does imitate the temple of Solomon in its scheme or not has often been a matter of discussion. The answer might be that it indeed imitates the literary model. In the lavish splendour of precious materials and sumptuous use of gold and silver, there is an obvious analogy, in particular in the textile curtains covering the templon and separating the side aisles from the central nave.

The Danish professor Mogens Krusturp¹² has illuminated this question from a new angle. He thinks that Anthemios departed from the so-called *Sigillum Salomonis*, the six-pointed star, known from late Babylonian and Hellenistic astrology, which Vitruvius takes as a basis for designing Roman theatres (fig 6). In a relief from the Bel temple at Palmyra illustrating the planets, surrounding the Sun God, in a hexagram with eagles at the corners, he traces an analogy to the cosmically shaped decoration of the dome of Saint Sophia, where four cherubim surround the deity.

When the Theodosian basilica of Saint Sophia was burnt down in the fatal Nika insurrection in 532, Iustinian called on a *mekanike*, a mechanic, Anthemios from Tralles, famous mathematician, architect and

¹⁰ Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, 3, 4.

¹¹ Cyril Mango, *The Art*, 85-86.

¹² Mogens Krusturp, *Le Corbusier og Anthemios fra Tralles*, in *Arkitektur* 20, 1985, 445-453, Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, The Pelican History of Art, Suffolk 1965, 153-165.

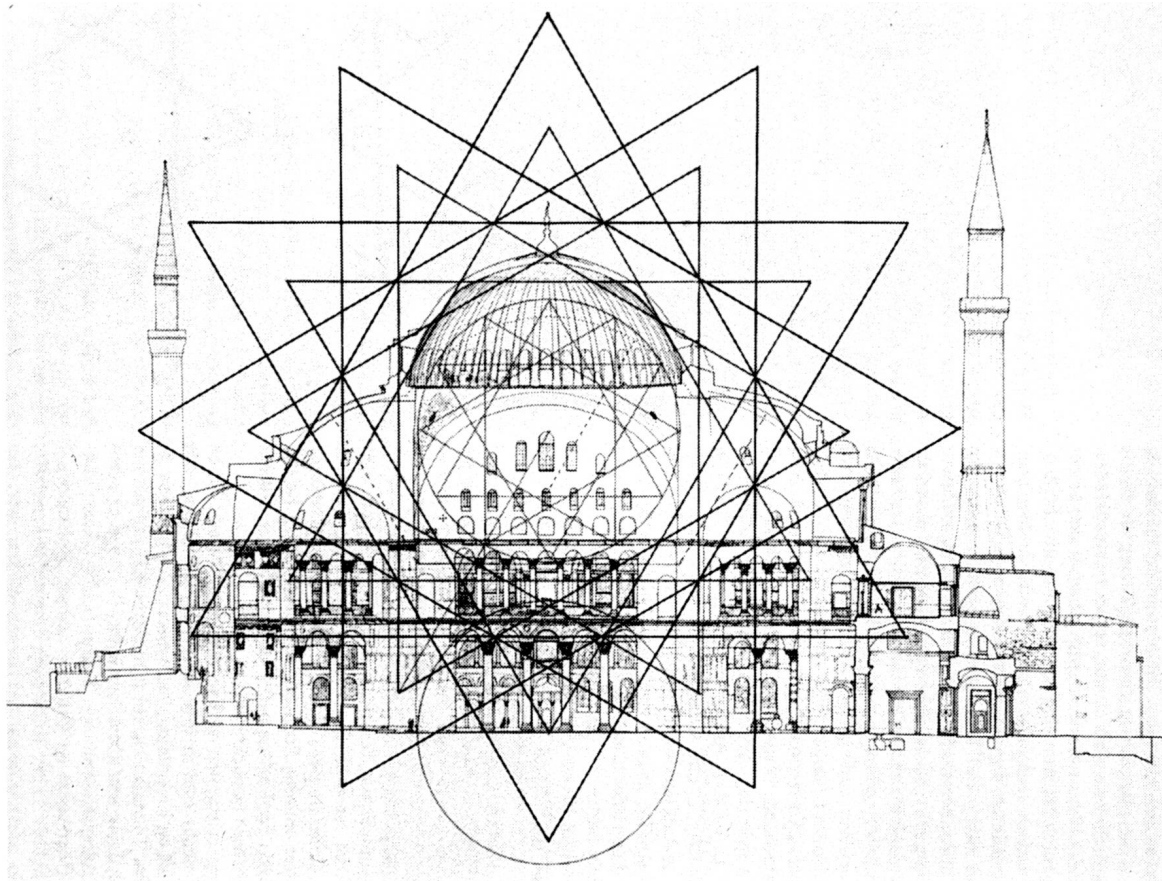


Fig 6 Geometrical interpretation of the elevation of Hagia Sophia by Mogens Krusturp, Arkitektur 20, 1985

expert on projectional geometry, and a *mekanopoios*, Isidoros from Miletos, an engineer, expert on vault construction. In earthquake-stricken Turkey it might be a mere miracle if domes do not collapse. The first dome collapsed in 538 and caused deformation of the base. The pendentives were partly reconstructed in 563 by Isidoros the younger and the clerestory walls were rebuilt below the lateral arches. The new ribbed dome was 56 metres high above the ground (figs 7, 8). The original pattern of windows, seven wider than now, was replaced by bricked windows. The arcades of the galleries and the wall that they carried were straightened out. The western facade was reinforced with four flying buttresses, projecting into the atrium. In 989, the western part of the new dome collapsed and was repaired by the Armenian architect Trdat. The eastern part collapsed in 1346.

After the Ottoman conquest the mosaics were hidden under yellow paint with the exception of the Theotokos in the apse (fig 9). A similar image is found in the Kaa'ba in Mecca, an extraordinary phenomenon in the aniconic Islamic tradition. The windows filled with coloured glass panes were now filled with stucco gratings.

The Ottoman sultans demonstrated great care for the building construction. Mehmet added the first minaret and reinforced the southern wall with a big buttress. Selim II erected two more minarets and added two buttresses on the northern wall. His son Murad III added the fourth minaret, repaired and renewed. Monograms of the four caliphs were put on the pillars flanking the apse and the entrance of the nave. Small mausolea covered with cupolas in memory of strangled minor relatives of the sultans, seventeen sons of Selim II, thirteen daughters and twenty-one sons of Murad II, were heaped up around the sides of the building.

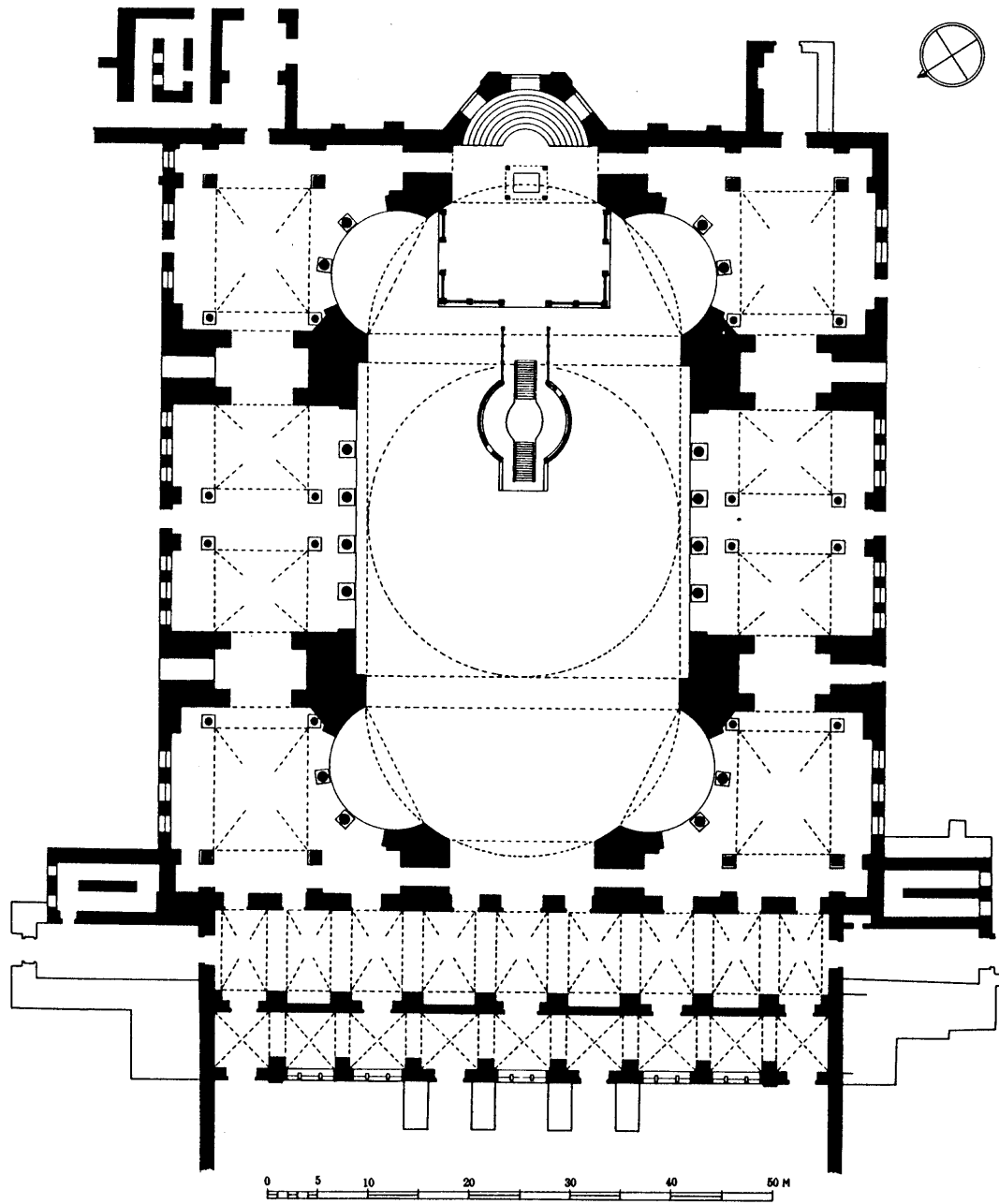


Fig 7 Plan of Hagia Sophia



Fig 8 Interior of Hagia Sophia

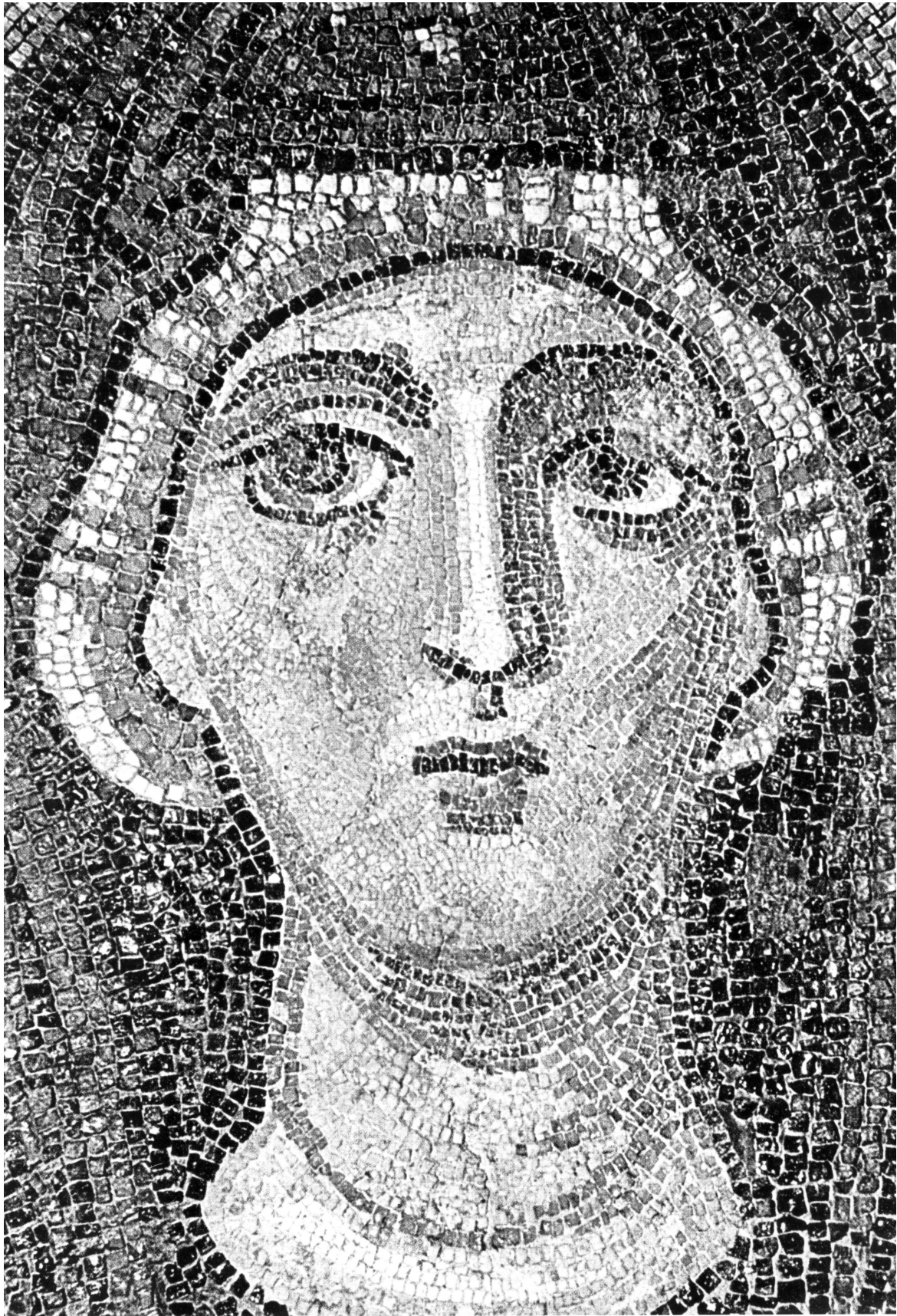


Fig 9 Mosaic in the apse of Hagia Sophia, Theotokos ca 867.
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ELISABETH PILTZ

The dome system and the gigantic double galleries keep the cathedral in equilibrium. The structure of the building is however unstable. It has been projected on the basis of a Byzantine 100-foot unit and not on statistical calculations. Consequently its structure is ideal.

The scheme is a double shell with an outer rectangle (230 x 250 feet) and an inner square, the sides of which measure 100 feet. The forty windows of the main dome are reinforced by 40 ribs inside and outside. The dome is supported by somewhat irregular pendentives. The northern and southern pillars are protruding outside the roof of the lateral aisles in order to counteract the pressure from the eastern and western arches.

The semi-cupolas rely on the main pillars and two supporting ones. Below them the conches are opening diagonally without rendering support. The barrel vaults leading from the semi-cupolas into the central axis do not strengthen either. The cross vaults behind the rounded exedrae are transversed by bow-formed colonnades without end. The pillars carrying the dome appear to be very massive in the lateral aisles, where they are not supposed to be seen, and slender in the central nave, because of their cover of marble. The gleaming play of light reaching its maximum in the window zone of the apse and the subtle hues of the precious materials dissolve the entire interior into immateriality. The marble shifts from dark grey over green, yellow striped, dark blue to porphyry. To this effect also the foliate capitals and the lace pattern of the arcades contribute.

The synthronon in the apse created strong reflexes of light, wholly in silver, where the patriarch was residing and also the colonnades in the sanctuary, completely in silver, and the multitude of votive crowns in gold hanging over the altar, adorned with precious stones. From the cornice of the main dome, thousands of lamps were hanging with ornaments in silver, and there is a pathway for lighting the candles. Candelabras with wax candles illuminated the lateral aisles. On the templon of the choir corresponding at that time to the iconostasis, there were icons of Christ, the Mother of God and imperial welfare institutions in Constantinople and on the altar reliefs of Christ, the Virgin and saints. Also the textiles screening off the central nave were adorned with figures.

With one exception figural mosaics were entirely lacking at the time of Iustinian. In the south-western corner in the chamber of the patriarch there was represented a Deësis. The imperial representative formula developed in San Vitale in Ravenna was adopted in the capital of the empire only in Macedonian time, after the period of iconoclasm.

Through an atrium with a portico the visitor passed by way of an empty exonarthex disposed crosswise, through the narthex into the central nave. On the exterior the volumes are heaped upon each other in a characteristic way that served as a model for the Ottoman classicism. The eye is led from the apse to the eastern semi-cupola and then to the main dome, the rounded volume of which is nowadays counteracted by the minarets.

II

In the 15th century the classical Ottoman architecture was developed in direct contact with Byzantium from the Seldjuk architecture which in the 12th-13th centuries had assimilated Anatolian traits, reaching its climax under Suleyman the Magnificent in the 16th century. The earlier Ottoman architecture emphasized horizontality with cell-like many-cupola constructions. It was now replaced by a large room for prayer disposed axially in breadth with a reduced number of supports carrying a system of domes in relative hierarchical coordination. Lucidity, light and soberly balanced harmony with sparse tectonically conditioned decoration in the interior contrasts with a strongly articulated exterior.

The new formula was a vertically closed type of mosque with several domes surrounded by four minarets giving the capital its distinctive character. From Hagia Sophia was adopted the system of semi-cupolas, pendentives and a reinforcing belt of alternating supports. Greater consideration was taken of the statics. Thus the instability of Saint Sophia was avoided.

Three foundations of mosques borrow directly from Hagia Sophia: the Fatih,¹³ consecrated in 1469, the Bayezidiye¹⁴ in 1507 and the Suleymaniye¹⁵ in 1550-57.

Mehmet the Conqueror's mosque, Fatih, destroyed in an earthquake 1767 (fig 10) and reconstructed 1767-71, was constructed on the site of the former shrine of the Holy Apostles on the fourth hill, the funeral sanctuary of Constantine the Great and Iustinian, the most important memorial in the city. In this conspicuous and destructive way the sultan indicated his ambition to act as the heir of Byzantium. He had let himself be well instructed into the Byzantine way of thinking by the new patriarch Gennadios II Scholarios.

The scheme of Fatih was influenced by that of the Saint Sophia cathedral and it preserved spolia from the terms of Zeuxippos and the shrine of the Holy Apostles, whose scheme is reflected in San Marco in Venice. Fatih has a simplified system of domes, lacking galleries and four big semi-cupolas. In front of the building was placed a well yard with arcades covered with cupolas. With its academic lateral complexes, eight madrasas, here was founded a centre for higher Islamic learning, heir of the famous university of Constantinople.

The mosque of Sultan Bayezid by the architect Chayed-din (figs 11, 12) unites the semi-cupola system of Saint Sophia with eight small cupolas. The exterior has Anatolian traits. The minarets assume the typical Seldjuk point of a pen form with galleries. In the interior the profiles of the bows of arcades have stone in two colours as is found in Cairo and the mosque of Cordova in Spain.

In the Sehzade Mosque, built 1543-48, Sinan's first major work, the Hagia Sophia system is developed into a cross-cupola construction with double exedrae augmenting the four semi-cupolas (fig 13, 14). The main dome is 19 metres wide and 38 metres high, supported by pendentives and pillars. The exterior is strikingly similar to Hagia Sophia with its closed facade and reclining proportions.

The Suleymaniye crowns the top of the capital hill (fig 15). The master, the universal architect of the Ottoman period, Sinan, born of Greek Christian parents in Agrines in Kayseri in Central Anatolia (we know that he intervened for Greeks who were to be evacuated by force to Cyprus), was recruited as a small boy to the elite education of the Janissaries in war tactics and engineering, and was forced through circumcision to accept the Islamic faith. From 1539 he wore the title *mimar-bashi*, leading court architect. He worked under three sultans and erected 312 known monuments around the empire.

The Suleymaniye changed the 16-unit scheme of Bayezidiye to a 25-unit scheme. The dome system of Saint Sophia was adopted but not the galleries, which were reduced to thin ornaments. The interior of the building, a rectangular hall for prayer delimited by four walls, is not covered by the main dome, the

¹³ Aptulla Kuran, *The Mosque*, 192-193.

¹⁴ Aptulla Kuran, *op cit* 194-195 and Sehzade 198.

¹⁵ A Efe, *Suleymaniye*, Istanbul 1986, passim.

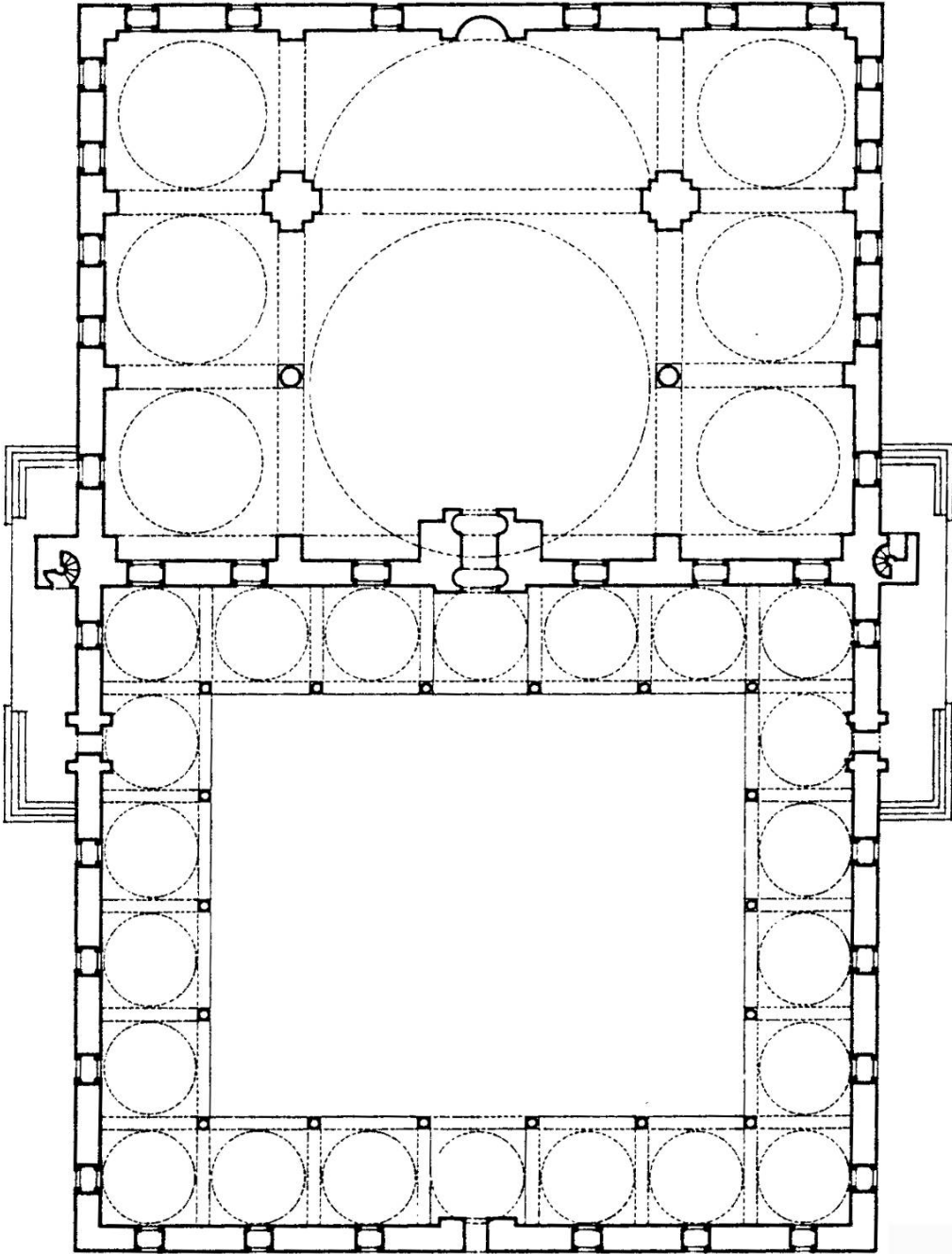


Fig 10 Plan of the Fatih Mosque, reconstructed by Ülgen

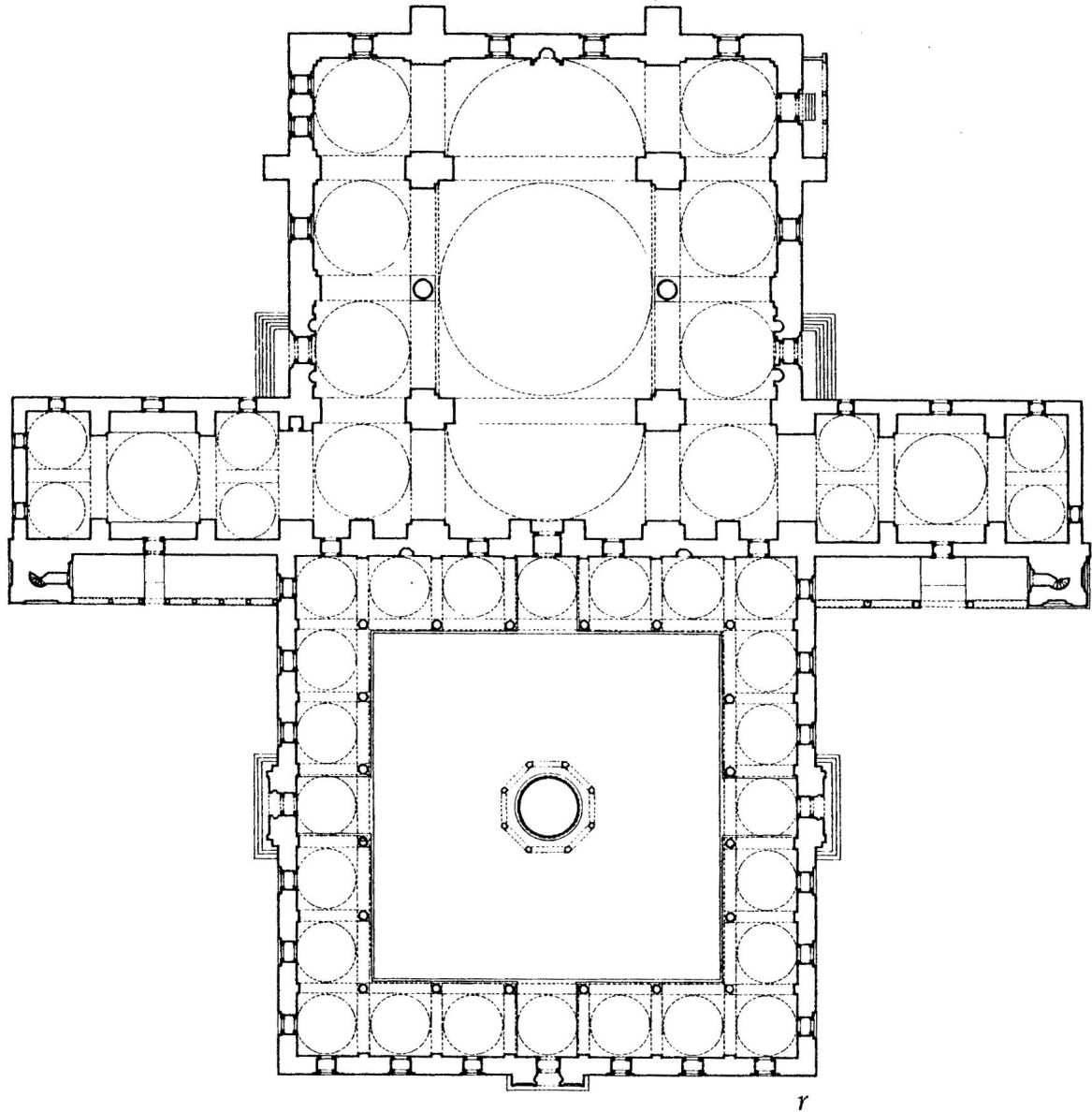


Fig 11 Plan of the Bayezid Mosque

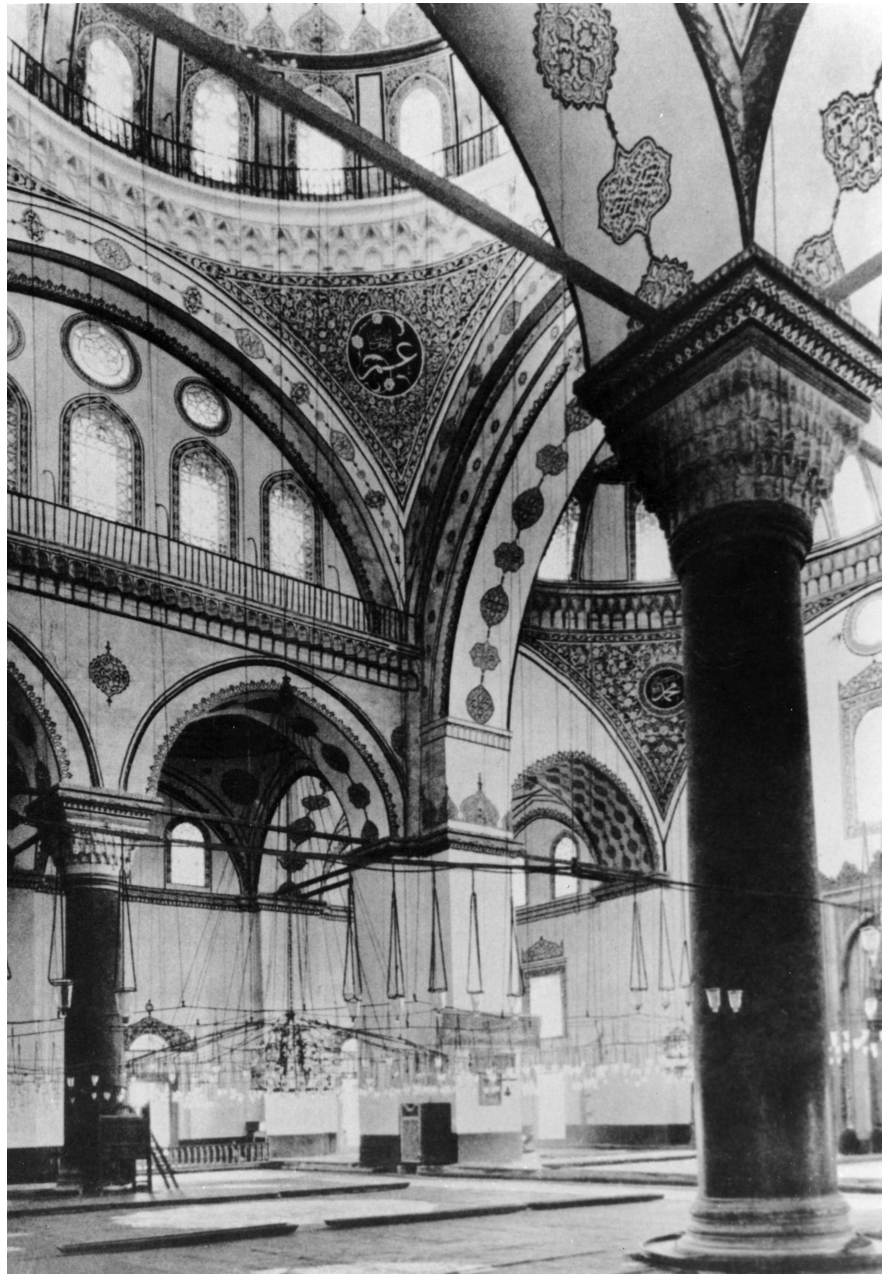


Fig 12 Interior of the Bayezid Mosque

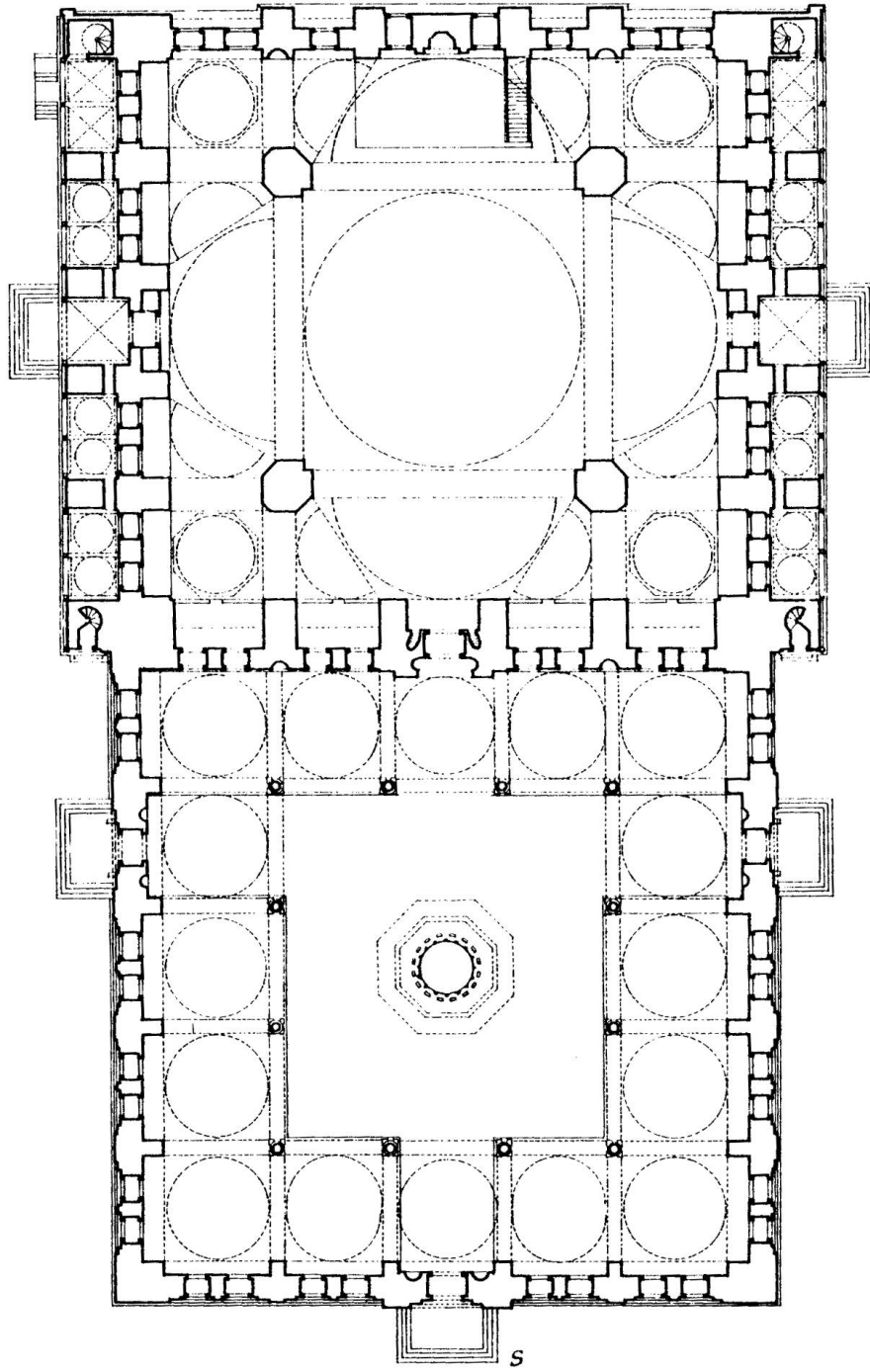


Fig 13 Plan of the Sehzade Mosque

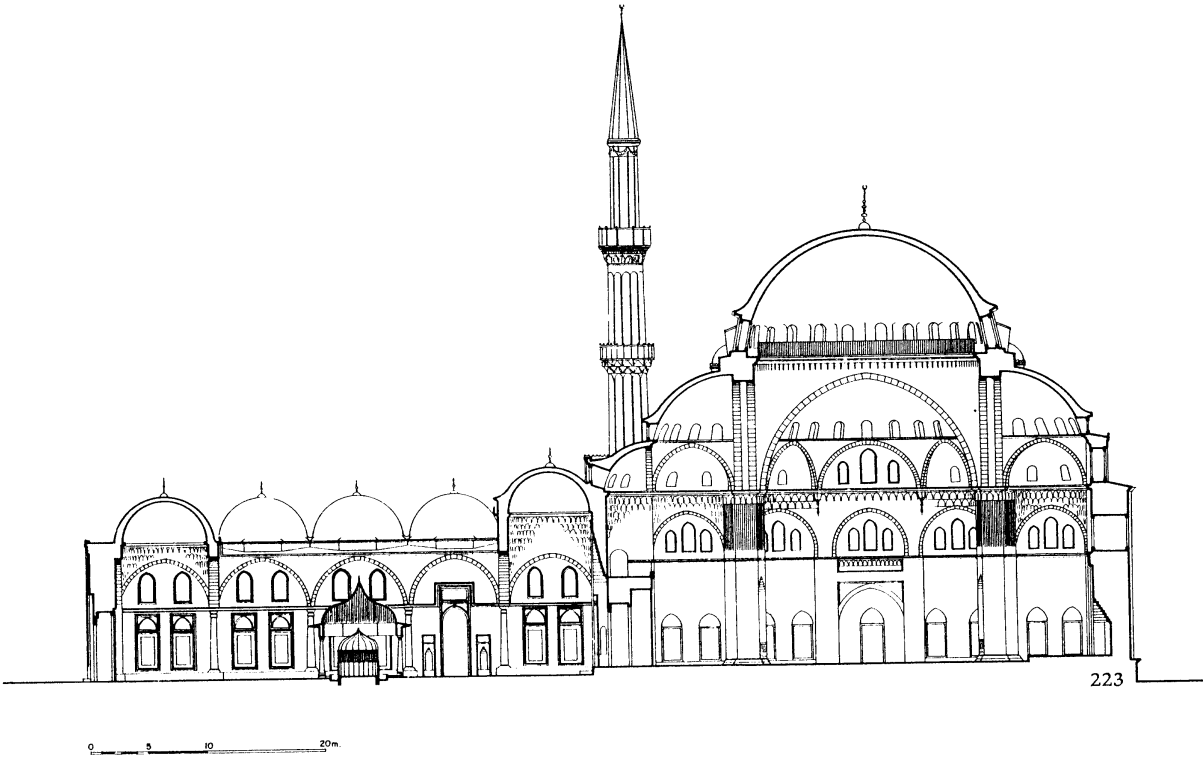


Fig 14 Section of the Sehzade Mosque

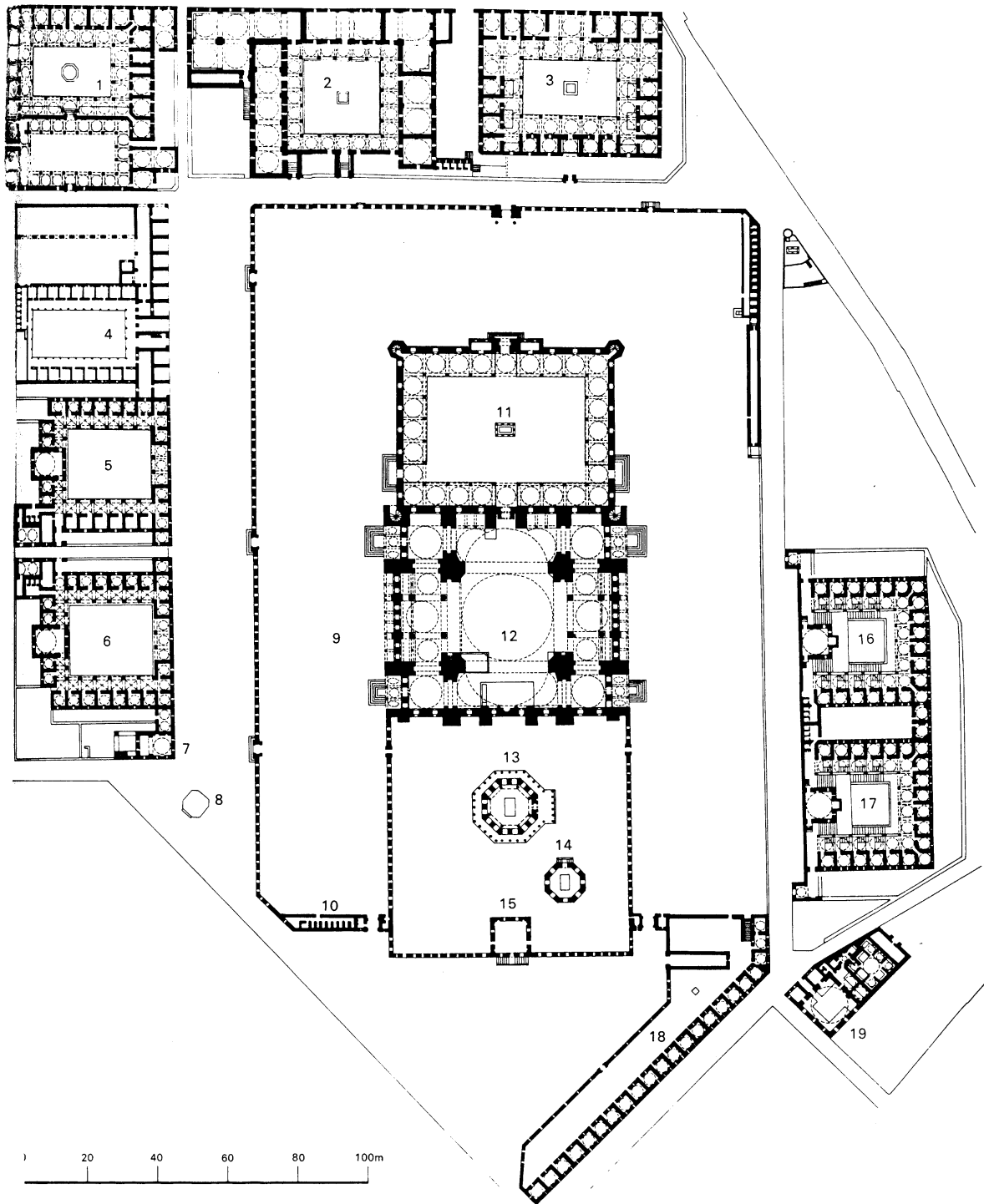


Fig 15 Plan of the Suleymaniye Mosque

Semi-cupolas and the two exedrae that make out the longitudinal axis. Lateral flanks with five cupolas deliberate the central nave from support. The main dome is scarcely five basic units, defined by the corner cupola.

The interior of the Suleymaniye is spacious and elegant. The light dome is supported by semi-cupolas but these are not supported by the semicircular niches as in Saint Sophia. The supports have been brought out to the sides. The disposition in breadth and the elimination of central supports give room for two rows of participants in the services standing behind each other in close eye contact with the imam (the intercessor) and the qibla-wall towards Mecca. The mammoth pillars supporting the dome appear to be slender in the room, surrounded by floating light, capturing the mind with its overwhelming harmony and where the static weight, as in Gothic cathedrals, seems to have been eliminated.

The prayer hall measures 61 x 70 metres with several cupolas. The inner minarets are 75 metres high and the outer 36 metres. The central dome is 49.5 metres high and has 32 windows, another sacred number, not repeating the symbolic 40 of Saint Sophia. It reminds, with its four times eight, of the four caliphs times the symbol of heaven. White and red stone in two shades have been used for the bows of the galleries, the doors and windows. The windows are placed in seven rows around the mihrab in coloured glass. The galleries are supported by four small columns and extend through the wall to the balconies in two floors on the exterior, below which the ritual washing takes place.

During Sultan Abdulmerid the areas of the walls and windows were given a coat of paint in the 19th-century Ottoman style by the two Swiss brothers Fossati. They carried out the same work at Saint Sophia. In 1961-67 these pastiche paintings were removed by Ali Saim Ülger. The original classical Ottoman decoration was restored with one exception – the paintings of the crown of the central dome were left intact in their 19th-century version.

The external walls of the mosque are reinforced with support on four sides. The plan is rational. The forecourt is a rectangle surrounded by arcades on four sides with 28 cupolas on different levels. The southern arcade is articulated in the longitudinal axis.

The big mosque yard is flanked by madrasas and bazaars – the First and Second Madrasa – now the Library of Suleymaniye – and hospital, hospits, imaret (public kitchen) and caravansaries. In other words it is a classical intra-city foundation for travellers, subordinate to a centre for higher academic learning in theology, jurisprudence and medicine.

The description of the Suleymaniye by Evliya Chelibi¹⁶ contains analogies to Saint Sophia:

Around the dome in the interior of the mosque there are rows of galleries supported by columns. During holy nights they are illuminated by fully 22,000 lamps and some thousand ornaments falling down from the ceiling... The court has three gates to which a staircase is leading up and down with three steps. It is covered with white marble. At the entrance to this gate there lies a huge circle-round block of porphyry.

Here we trace another parallel from Saint Sophia, the spot where the emperor used to stand during certain ceremonies, the *rota*.

The stunningly beautiful mosque of Selimiyeh at Edirne (Adrianople), built by Sinan in 1568, lets its main dome, which preserves the row of windows of Saint Sophia, just as that of Schzade did, be supported by eight pillars carrying bows of arcades. The dome is 42 metres high and the four minarets 83 metres each (figs 16, 17).

¹⁶ Evliya Chelibi, *loc cit*, in Lewis, *op cit* 107-111.

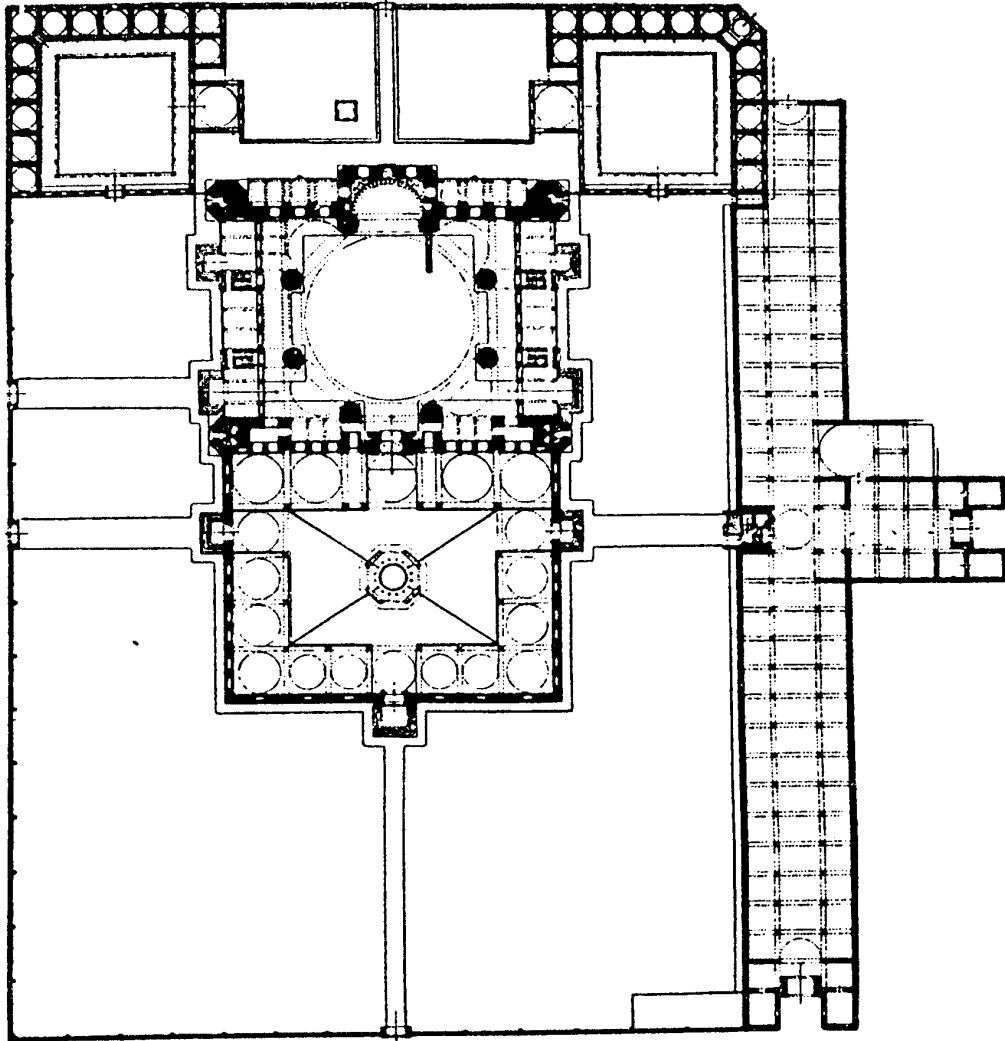


Fig 16 Plan of the Selimiye Mosque 1568, Edirne

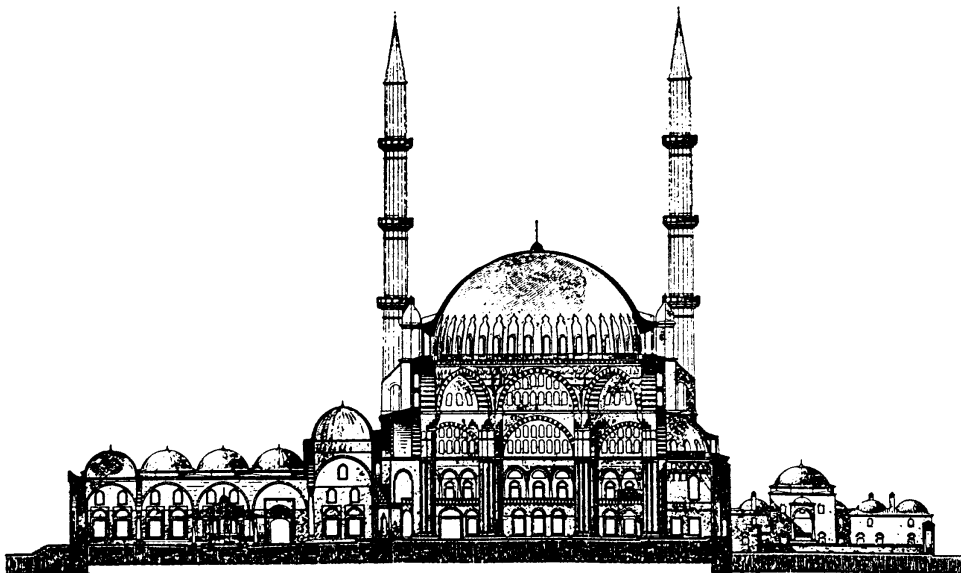


Fig 17 Section of the Selimiye Mosque, Edirne

In 1616 Ahmed I, the last sultan who at his accession to the throne strangled his minor relatives, built a mosque that was to surpass the Suleymaniye with its rich interior splendour of tiles of faience in blue and green (another reminiscence from Byzantium), with quotations of the Quran and a system of domes with supporting semi-cupolas. The main dome relies on a circular drum with six minarets in the exterior. This was considered to be a sacrilege, as the Kaa'ba in Mecca had only six minarets at the time, which caused the sultan immediately to add a seventh there.

The Byzantine cosmos with its splendour of images was deprived of its icons by the Ottomans and translated into an expression of the perfection of Paradise, where, according to the promise of the Quran, science and learning will receive their distinctive rewards.

These precise architectural formulae appear particularly suggestive in the evening light.

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